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# POEMS

LONDON: PRINTED BY  
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POEMS  
BY  
WILLIAM BELL SCOTT.

BALLADS, STUDIES FROM NATURE, SONNETS, ETC.

*ILLUSTRATED BY SEVENTEEN ETCHINGS*

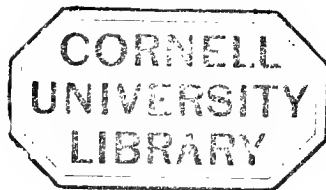
BY THE AUTHOR AND L. ALMA TADEMA



LONDON  
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.  
1875

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## P R E F A C E.

EXCEPTING some of the Ballads at the beginning of the volume, and a number of the Sonnets, particularly those called 'The Old Scotch House,' the poems now published have been written many years. This being the case, the author thinks he may indulge in the old-fashioned luxury of a Preface ; only a short one, however, and merely to state certain circumstances relating to some of the pieces.

In the present volume the writer has collected together the productions he wishes most to preserve, or at least the majority of these ; he has carefully revised them, and lovingly decorated them, with the assistance of a friend, as a duty to himself, and to place before the public in a permanent form his credentials to be considered a poet. For a number of years he has been urged to do something of this kind by friends whose judgment in matters poetic is not mere opinion : sweet is praise from the receivers

of praise; and he has been contented without any appeal to the public. But there is a day for all things, and after a period of active work of very various kinds, obeying the maxim, 'What thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might,' he thinks the time has come for the pleasant task of putting his poetical house in order.

A number of the following poems have indeed been various times printed before, although never very accessibly to the public. Many of these he has freely revised, believing that the best word is not found even within the Horatian period sometimes, or at least that it depends on the nature of the man whether his first or last thought is the best. He has also restored one or two to their original MS. form. The rhapsody 'To the Memory of P. B. Shelley' first appeared in 'Tait's Edinburgh Magazine' forty-two years ago, and the point of view taken by a student of that day adds some historical interest to the poem, warranting its reproduction here. Shelley's too-easily-uttered metaphysics, and jejune theories, political and moral, derived from and representative of the great French revolution with its three watchwords continually outraged, will never again be lauded in exactly the same manner. Two other pieces towards the end

of this volume, 'The Incantation of Hervor,' and 'The Dance of Death,' were produced a year or two later in a little *brochure* called 'The Edinburgh University Souvenir.' The latter poem has been revised. Others not given under the heading 'Juvenile Poems' are equally ancient. One of these, 'Anthony,' although first published in the 'Fortnightly' only a few years ago, is old enough to have been read in a somewhat longer form in MS. by John Wilson. The author remembers the amusement expressed on the lion-like face of that genial literary partizan at the lines near the close of the poem, describing the beggar who tried to strike the charitable with his crutch, finding in them a vivid picture of Christopher North !

Many others have appeared before in a small volume called 'Poems by a Painter,' printed at a provincial press in a careless manner. This title was afterwards appropriated by Sir J. Noel Paton, a painter of sufficient power and invention to exonerate him from intentional transfer. That now called 'The Music of the Spheres,' first saw the light in a very small volume in 1838 under the name of 'Hades,' so that the resemblance that has been supposed to exist between it and the Roman Catholic production of

Dr. Newman called 'The Dream of Gerontius' is accidental as far as the author knows. Other cases wherein a resemblance, either in motive or form, may be fancied to exist to any more modern work, it is not necessary to mention. Originality the writer takes some credit for; he has, moreover, left out some poems whose subjects or motives have been adopted by later poets, and realised in a more poetical or completer manner, considering that the best, not the first, should stand alone.

This concerns rather the author himself than his readers. No external or adventitious merits, nor even purely intellectual qualities, can altogether determine the value of poetry. It must affect us like music or wine, but it must certainly have Wisdom, like an instinct, directing it from within. Every excellent poetic work has a physiognomy of its own, an organic character of its own, the possession or non-possession of which the world will sooner or later sympathetically determine. So fully aware is he of this, and so careless of immediate recognition has he been, that his earlier publications were issued in a way rather fitted to his convenience than to invite attention, and he never once asked their publishers or quasi-publishers for any account of results. The chances of sale for

new poetical aspirants out of London were then very small indeed. His former little volumes are, however, entirely unprocurable, he believes.

With regard to the illustrations, the author-and-artist-in-one has given rather pictorial analogues to the sentiment and meaning of the poems than direct representations. He has also to acknowledge the kind aid of one of the most able painters of the age. The artist by natural endowment finds little difficulty, whatever instrument may be placed in his hand ; and the writer's friend, L. Alma Tadema, expressed himself at once with the etching-point as if he had used it all his life.





## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
LADY JANET, MAY JEAN	1
KRIEMHILD'S TRYST . . . . .	7
WOODSTOCK MAZE . . . . .	23
THE WITCHES' BALLAD . . . . .	29
SAINT MARGARET . . . . .	35

	PAGE
THE RENDEZVOUS . . . . .	37
'I GO TO BE CURED AT AVILION' . . . . .	42
ANTHONY . . . . .	44
LOVE'S CALENDAR . . . . .	60
A BRIDAL RACE . . . . .	62
PARTING AND MEETING AGAIN (a Song) . . . . .	64
LOVE. . . . .	65

*SONNETS.*

OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE . . . . .	73
PARTED LOVE . . . . .	90

*THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.*

PART I. . . . .	97
PART II. . . . .	105

*STUDIES FROM NATURE.*

SUNDAY MORNING ALONE . . . . .	113
GREEN CHERRIES . . . . .	118
YOUTH AND AGE . . . . .	122
AN ARTIST'S BIRTHPLACE . . . . .	123
MORNING SLEEP . . . . .	127
MONODY . . . . .	131
THE DUKE'S FUNERAL. . . . .	134
MIDNIGHT (written 1831) . . . . .	138
THE SEASHORE. I. MIST . . . . .	142
„ „ II. SUNSHINE . . . . .	143
REQUIEM . . . . .	145
THE VENERABLE BEDE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	147



## MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

	PAGE
THE SPHINX . . . . .	159
A DEDICATION . . . . .	166
RHYME OF THE SUN-DIAL . . . . .	169
IN THE VALLEY . . . . .	171
MAY . . . . .	173

## SONNETS ON LITERARY SUBJECTS.

ON THE INSCRIPTION, KEATS'S GRAVESTONE, ROME .	179
WORDSWORTH. I. . . . .	180
,,    II. . . . .	181
,,    III. . . . .	182
TO THE ARTISTS CALLED P.R.B. (1851) .	183
ON CERTAIN CRITICS, &c. . . . .	184
EPITAPH OF HUBERT VAN EYCK . . . . .	185
FRAGMENT OF A SONNET BY RAPHAEL . . . . .	186
THE MUSICIAN . . . . .	187
TO MY BROTHER, ON PUBLISHING HIS 'MEMOIR'	188
INSCRIPTION ON ALBERT DÜRER'S GRAVE . . . . .	189

## OCCASIONAL SONNETS.

PYGMALION . . . . .	193
THE SWAN . . . . .	194
SPRING LOVE . . . . .	195
AN ANNIVERSARY . . . . .	196
THE MIDNIGHT CITY . . . . .	197
KISSES. I. . . . .	198
,,    II. . . . .	199
THE TRAVELLER LOST . . . . .	200
THE NIGHTINGALE UNHEARD . . . . .	201
IN ROME, A.D. 150 (for a Picture) . . . . .	202

	PAGE
COMING AND GOING . . . . .	203
MY MOTHER. I . . . . .	204
,,    II. . . . .	205
ASSISTANCE DELAYED . . . . .	206
UNWORTHY AMBITION . . . . .	207
THE MUSIC OF THE SPHERES . . . . .	208

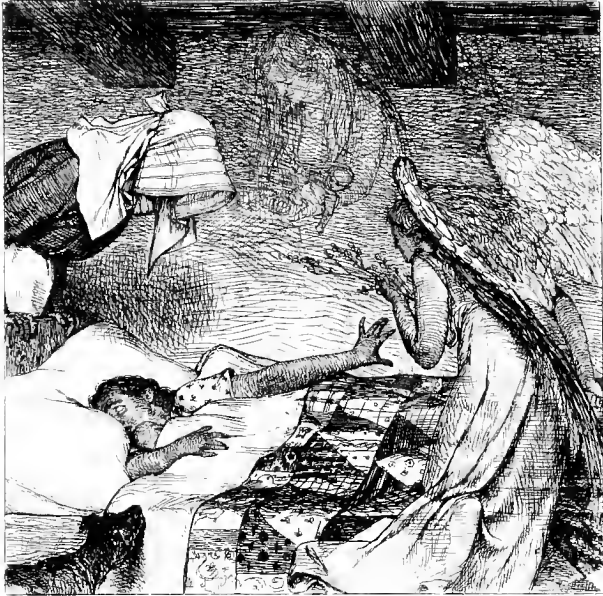
*JUVENILE POEMS.*

TO THE MEMORY OF P. B. SHELLEY . . . . .	221
TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN KEATS . . . . .	226
THE INCANTATION OF HERVOR . . . . .	231
FOUR ACTS OF ST. CUTHBERT . . . . .	237
THE DANCE OF DEATH . . . . .	253
A FABLE . . . . .	263
DEDICATIO POSTICA . . . . .	271

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

LOVE ORIGINATING ART . . . . .	<i>W. B. Scott. Title-page</i>
AN OLD CHEST . . . . .	,, p. xi
LADY JANET . . . . .	<i>L. Alma Tadema. 1</i>
ERIC AND THE WATER-WITCH. . . . .	,, 7
FAIR ROSAMUND . . . . .	,, 23
PAX VOBISCUM: A SATIRE (designed by D. Scott) . . . . .	<i>W. B. Scott . 44</i>
THE WAY OF LIFE. WHITHER? . . . . .	,, 71
PENKILL, AYRSHIRE . . . . .	,, 95
THE GARDEN, PENKILL . . . . .	,, 105
A STULY FROM NATURE . . . . .	,, 111
DESIGN REMEMBERED FROM A DREAM (from a sketch done on waking October 28, 1846) . . . . .	,, 131
THE GREAT SPHINX . . . . .	<i>L. Alma Tadema. 159</i>
KEATS' GRAVE, ROME . . . . .	<i>W. B. Scott 177</i>
PYGMALION . . . . .	,, 191
RECREATING GENII . . . . .	,, 208
THE AUTHOR ÆT. 20 (painted by D. Scott) . . . . .	,, 219
HERVOR (painted by Alice Boyd, Penkill) . . . . .	,, 231





*LADY JANET, MAY JEAN.*

'TWEEN sleeping and waking, 'tween fever and fear,  
The lady Janet, May Jean,  
Felt her mothering hour draw near ;  
So wearily dreaming 'tween fever and fear ;  
*The shards have cut the shoeless feet.*

May Jean she was with the snood on her head,  
 Lady Janet she would be were she wed,  
 But she locked herself in on her lonely bed.

*The housel is borne along the street.*

Was it the wise-woman on the bower-stair  
 From lady Janet, May Jean?

Wrapt in her thin arms what doth she bear  
 Against her hard bosom ; why speeds she and where

*The wind is about in the crow's nest.*

It was the wise-woman no one knew  
 Came down as the dark night mottled grew,  
 And, groping her way, to the postern flew.

*The stream doth every cranny quest.*

To shoot back the bar and make no sound,  
 O lady Janet, May Jean !

She laid down the fardel on the ground,  
 And the in-rushing cold wind swept all round ;—

*Long willow leaves are white below.*

But the house dog's near, his scent is keen,  
 The fardel and wise-wife he ran between,  
 He snatched and ran and was no more seen.

*Black are the berries of nightshade and sloe.*

On the carven bed in the lighted bower  
 Turned lady Janet, May Jean,

Waiting it seemed to her, hour on hour,  
 Hearing the wind creak the vane on the tower ;—

*The tide-wave breathes by sink and swell.*

Why is she watching with eye and ear,  
Shadowed and restless in fever and fear,  
When the bolt is drawn and no one near?  
Sees she or hears she anything  
Except the lamp's flame and the moth's wing?

*Sea-foam seethes the empty shell.*

Yes, yes, she hears now a small faint cry,  
Hears lady Janet, May Jean ;  
She sees on the hearth the fardel lie,  
And the shaggy-limbed house dog standing by ;—

*The brain swims when the hot winds blow.*

Her fair-tressed weak head she lifted then,  
And she cried, ' I am lost, oh, never again  
Shall I know peace or be honoured of men !'

*The bare breast shrinks beneath the snow.*

Her fair hair swept the bolster white,  
The lady Janet's, May Jean's ;  
And faintly she called, ' Old witch of the night,  
You have played me false, you've deceived me quite !'

*The way to hell's by stepping-stones.*

At once that wise-woman no one knew  
Out of the carven bedstead grew ;  
Like a real thing came she clear to view.

*The raven is over the dead lamb's bones.*

' The dog he followed me as I ran,  
My lady Janet, May Jean,  
And snatched it and stole it when I began

To gather the dry leaves and finish our plan ;'—

*The eyes of the dying shine I know.*

' But hide it again, thou leman of Night,  
Wise-woman, witch-woman, make me right ;  
Hide it in safety before daylight !'

*The warning cock three times will crow.*

They are gone, that wise-woman has the power ;

And lady Janet, May Jean,

Again is alone in that lone bower,

Her whole soul listening beyond the tower ;—

*The dead are safe i' their graves we say.*

Why is her life in her eye and ear,  
Writhing and striving in fever and fear,  
When the bolt is drawn and no one near ?  
Sees she or hears she anything  
Saving the lamp and the moth's quick wing ?

*They cannot leave till the judgment day.*

Yes, she hears again that cry !

Hears lady Janet, May Jean ;

She sees by the bedside the fardel lie,

With a gentle-faced grey ghost standing by ;—

*Are they not really gone who die ?*

She shakes back her tresses, she lifts her hand,  
For holy water she had at command,  
To scald the wicked like hot sand.

*There's no lamp-light where spirits lie.*

' Receive it back,' the grey ghost cried,

' Sweet lady Janet, May Jean !



I too, long ago, before I died,  
Threw the loud-tongued new life from my side ;—

*Once the clock strikes, never more.*

‘ Begone ! ’ sore troubled, she tried to say,  
‘ Sweet-tongued ghost-woman, hide it away,  
Hide it for ever before it is day ! ’

*Voices pass from shore to shore.*

Again she ’s alone, and within that bower,  
The lady Janet, May Jean,  
Lays down her head for another hour,  
Listens and looks through the walls of the tower ;—

*The bell-ringer mounts the spire-stair.*

Why is her heart in her eye and ear,  
Whence is the fever, and whence the fear,  
When the bolt is drawn and no one near ?  
Hears she or sees she anything ?

The moth at last hath burned its wing :

*Clang o’ the matin is heard i’ the air.*

She hears still nearer that new-born cry,  
Hears lady Janet, May Jean ;  
She sees close to her the fardel lie,  
With Mary the Blessèd May standing by,  
In an arbour of white lilies great and high ;—

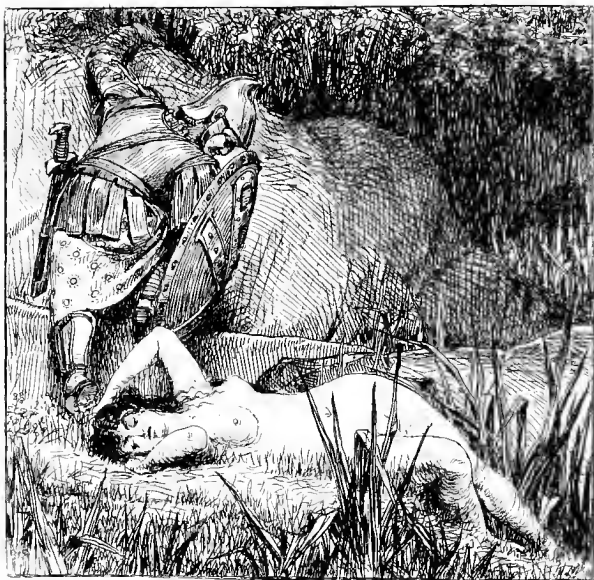
*The light should burn bright on the altar.*

Then Mary the Blest bent down and undid  
The swathes of linen that were its bed,  
And took in her hand the small child’s head

*Now the quire-leader opens the psalter,*

‘Welcome!’ said she, ‘my son’s young brother;  
Dear lady Janet, May Jean,  
Here is the God’s-gift, His and no other,  
To be thine for ever, thou May and yet mother!’  
*The new day’s dawning spreadeth wide.*

Is it but now that her eyes unclosed,  
That she first sees the small face like a rose  
Upon her own white breast repose?  
*Sunrise clouds have gold inside.*



*KRIEMHILD'S TRYST.*

I

CHILDE ERIC from the Middle-sea  
Rides on his homeward way,  
To keep his tryste with fair Kriemhild,  
His tryste of an early day.

Childe Eric rides by the swift running beck,  
Its sound fills all the air ;  
It is warm in the midsummer weather ;  
It is noon, he will rest him there.

He throws the rein of his good roan steed  
On the bough of a sycamore,  
And, dropping from brae to bank, he gains  
The linn-pool's pebbly shore.

He had travelled far from morn till noon,  
The fresh stream danced and sang,  
So to cast his surcoat and hose of mail  
He did not question lang.

Then caroll'd he loud as the water,  
So bright, so fresh, so full ;  
His shapely waist and fair broad chest  
Flashed in the quivering pool.

But scarcely had he stept three steps,  
He heard a low shrill call,  
And when he stept again there came  
A laugh from the waterfall.

And he saw within the rainbow mist,  
Within the shimmering veil,  
A naked woman watching him,  
Breathless and rosy-pale.

Two heavy sheaves of golden hair  
About her round loins met,  
Yet, for all the waters falling,  
These thick locks were not wet.

Her great kind eyes, her wild sweet eyes,  
They smiled and loved him so,  
He shrank back in bewilderment,  
Yet had no wish to go.

But he felt sure that bonnie brown quean  
Was none of Eve's true kin :  
Naked and unabashed, straight and frank,  
Harboured within the linn.

Silenced, with wandering wits he stood,  
His fair limbs but half hid,  
Then stretched his hand from rock to rock,  
And backward sloped and slid.

But suddenly to the waist he sank,  
And forward sprang the maid,  
Round either side his tingling waist  
Her arms a girdle made.

Then breast to breast in the cool water  
Was warmly, blindly pressed,  
And heart to heart, as love is born,—  
Her great clear eyes confessed

An innocence and a childish joy,  
And hope's most flattering song,  
That he, as was his wont with maids,  
Was reassured and strong.

At once he kissed her eager mouth—  
It was a quivering, wildering kiss—  
Tighter she strained him in her arms,  
And fixed devouring lips on his.

And owned that she had waited long  
For him, Childe Eric, him alone ;  
But he must swear her troth, and be,  
As Holy Writ says, bone of bone.

As she had heard the priest declare,  
When she hid by the chapel door,  
And he told them all of Adam and Eve—  
The old priest of Felsenore.

'I'll bring you luck, you'll bring me grace,  
And we'll be marrows, you and me ;  
A wife and a mother, my long hair coiffed,  
Clad in long-lawn and cramoisie.'

Yes, yes, his troth—as he had done  
In eastern lands before,  
To dark eyes and brown jewelled ears—  
He pledged it o'er and o'er.

‘Oh, then baptise me, Childe Delight !  
Madonna Mary, christen me !’—  
The water now wet her sheaves of hair,  
And he laughed at her pietie.

For he trusted in magic, and had come  
Through Rome, that evil vale,  
Where with the false pope Archimed  
He had quaffed from the Holy Graal.

He laughed—but is not that his hound’s  
Long howl above the brae ?  
And is not that his good roan steed—  
What maketh it stamp and neigh ?

Oh, she was lissom and fond and strong,  
Guileless and wild and free ;  
Nor had she even a thought uncouth  
Lying under the rowan tree.

He was Eric the tall, from Mickle-garth,  
Her husband and paramour ;  
And she was a wife now, body and soul,  
So thoughtful and demure.

The manyfold kisses, and new sweet speech,  
That four lips feel like fire ;  
The thirsting heart and the hungry eyes,  
Why must they ever tire ?

But all things else, all fair things else,  
    'The sun and his fruits also,  
The birds and leaves, the flowers and sheaves,  
    They change, and they may go.

Into that warm nest, filled with song  
    By the lark and the murmuring linn,  
Nought living came ; but the pensive eye  
    Of a white doe once looked in.

They slept, I think, till all at once  
    He rose with a start and stare,  
Like a man who knew not where he was,  
    Nor how he had come there,  
And climbed the bank and found his steed  
    Had cropped all round it bare.

Sadly it turned its proud arched neck,  
    And tried to lick his hand,  
So he mounted in haste, and gallop'd away  
    To the lady Kriemhild's land.

But he had sworn he would return,  
    Return to the May, had he,  
With a ring, and a necklace, and girdle-gold,  
    And long-lawn and cramoisie.



## II

Beyond the sound of the widening beck  
He rode to the river strand,  
And at her bower-door on the island  
He saw the good Kriemhild stand.

Behind her too, on either side,  
Her bower-maids, a sister pair,  
Clad both the same in sea-green serge,  
Trimmed with the minnevair.

But her long waist was in white say,  
Looped up with knops of gold ;  
For she was the heiress of the land,  
And towns with garth and wold.

Along yon further shore you see  
Her castle walls and tower ;  
But she had planned the tryste to be  
Within her island-bower.

So these green-kirtled serving-maids,  
They ferried him o'er the tide ;—  
As he leaned and looked in the tangled deep,  
What was it he descried ?

What was it? for he backward shrank,  
And made the light bark sway,  
Till it grated against the landing steps,—  
He seemed to have lost his way.

The lady then came stepping down  
Towards him in surprise ;  
Sudden he seized her two white hands,  
And bowed to hide his eyes.

With that the distant warder blew  
A note from the highest tower ;  
Startled, he kissed her two white hands,  
And they passed within the bower.

‘ I wonder much,’ quoth fair Joanne  
To her sister Claribee,  
‘ What made him wince when that great fish  
Swam up so bonnily?’

Each side the door then sat they down,  
With lutes of cedar wood ;  
Joan sang this song, and Claribee,  
She made the refrain good.

Quoth the wanderer, I have journeyed far,  
Oh, give me wine and bread !

*Is the popinjay merry ?*

I have broken the bread and drank the wine,  
I prithee now make my bed ;

*The heart is as cold as stone.*

For, alas ! I am wounded deep and sore,  
And you must salve my wound :

*Is the popinjay merry ?*

With her balsam sweet that lady-leech  
She made him whole and sound.

*The heart is as cold as stone.*

Anon, when again he was whole and well,  
He said she must marry him ;

*Is the popinjay merry ?*

And so it fell out that she called the priest,  
All in the twilight dim.

*The heart is as cold as stone.*

But when the wedding-ring touched her hand,  
I must leave you, love, quoth he ;

*Is the popinjay merry ?*

For I have a wife in a far-off town,  
Across the weary sea.

*The heart is as cold as stone.*

But she would not now by wind or wave  
That he should go away ;

*Is the popinjay merry ?*

So she made Sir Merlin weave a spell,  
He could not choose but stay.

*The heart is as cold as stone.*

Nor could he remember ever more,  
 Though he strove with might and main ;

*Is the popinjay merry ?*

The wife he had left in the far-off land  
 He never would see again.

*The heart is as cold as stone.*

Scarce ended they, a quivering flame  
 Winnowed the sultry air,  
 And a surf running up as from sea-wind  
 Lapped the green margin there.

The damsels laughed at the silvery foam  
 That ran back again as fast ;  
 Then tightened the cords of their gitterns,  
 And sang against the blast :  
 But as they sang a darkness fell,  
 And hail-stones rattled past.

HÆC.

Rest ye now from all your pain,  
 My heart's delight, my found-again.

ILLE.

Found again, but full of pyne  
 Thou art also, mistress mine.

HÆC.

Yea, but now we'll make amend ;  
 The years of tears have reached their end.

ILLE.

Tears and years—oh, many a one  
Since my wand'rings were begun !

HÆC.

Wanderings here and there away,  
Never done at close of day.

ILLE.

Never done, but hankering still  
For the old days of wild freewill.

HÆC.

Childish days when, ages gone,  
We foster-children lived alone.

ILLE.

Lived and loved, for then we knew  
Where the sweetest apple grew.

HÆC.

But once, alas ! you plucked it down,  
And wrapt it in my guiltless gown.

ILLE.

Plucked and shared it, rind and core ;  
Yet the sun set as before.

HÆC.

The sun set, but it rose no more ;  
It went down, and life shut the door.

ILLE.

Shut, but we shall entrance gain ;—  
Behold ! the sun wakes up again.

HÆC.

Another sweet apple upon the tree—  
Lovers in dead years, can they see ?

ILLE.

See and pluck, rind, core, and pips,  
Part and share with hungry lips.

HÆC.

Part and share, but alas ! it drips—  
Drips with blood,—My heart's delight !  
Our hearts are torn in mirk midnight.

III

Therewith a cry shot over them,  
As it came from out the sea—  
The cry of a woman in sharp despite,  
Crying, ' Aï, woe is me !'

The hail it flashed on bench and board,  
By a loud wind borne along ;  
The singers fled within the bower,  
And thrust the bolt so strong.

And there the lady Kriemhild sat,  
Childe Eric by her side,—  
Together sat they hand in hand,  
But their eyes were turned aside.

And the damsels knew as she sat so still,  
With never a welcome word,  
Their ditty had shorn between them  
As it had been a sword.

They too were foster-children once,  
Their love too had been strong,—  
Can what hath passed return again  
Like the burden of a song ?

For Love descends with a great surprise,  
An angel on our cold floor ;  
And he never should leave us, never again,  
For we're colder than before.

Was this the boy she played with once  
Come from the great war's game,  
More learned too than a priest, 'twas said,—  
While she remained the same ?

It seemed as she sat, long miles away  
Some wedding-bells rang out ;  
But whether for her or for some other bride,  
She mazed herself in doubt.

Whose were they if they were not hers?  
Some dream she would recall ;  
But the gathering thunder swept them out,  
And shook the wainscot wall.

Then again that wild lamenting cry,  
' Ai, oh, woe is me !'  
Severed the air like a fiery lance ;—  
Nor could she choose but see  
It went right through him like his doom,—  
' Ai, oh, woe is me !'

And with it rolled a surge of waves  
All round the bower outside ;  
A knocking smote the bolted door,  
The voice behind it cried :—

' Come back to me, Eric ! I am now  
A woman with love in store ;—  
Why went you while I slept ?—my hair  
Is not now as heretofore.

' It clings so heavy and cold and wet,  
Oh, hasten, and bring with thee  
The ring and the necklace and girdle-gold,  
The long-lawn and cramoisie !



‘ My guardian and my husband sworn,  
Return again to me,  
And these sea-waters will go back,  
Back safe into the sea.

‘ The rain it runs down breast and thigh,—  
For thee I am so brave :  
I would not that mine ancient kin  
Shall make the floods thy grave !’

The gentle Kriemhild and her maids  
Together stood quite still,  
Stood altogether listening  
To the voice so wild and shrill.

‘ Childe Eric, oh my long-betrothed,  
Who is this calling so ?’  
‘ Alas ! I know not nor can tell,  
And you must never know.’

‘ My sweet bower-maidens, tell me true,  
Who is it calleth him ?’  
‘ I see,’ quoth Joan, ‘ by the window-pane  
A brown sea-serpent swim——’

‘ But we must mount the topmost steps,  
The flood-waves rise so high,’—  
‘ I cannot move,’ Childe Eric cries ;  
‘ I must remain to die.’

With that she fell upon his neck,  
She would not leave him there ;  
But her damsels raised her in their arms,  
And clomb the higher stair.

And as they climbed they heard below  
The door wide open fly ;  
'Then all at once the darkness broke  
Across the rending sky,

And struggling strongly out, they saw,  
Amidst the coiling spray,  
A long-haired woman's shining arms,  
Wherein Childe Eric lay !

And faintly came again that cry,  
' Aï, oh, woe is me !  
Where is the ring and the girdle-gold,  
The long-lawn and cramoisie ?'



*WOODSTOCK MAZE.*

‘ O NEVER shall anyone find you then ! ’  
Said he, merrily pinching her cheek ;  
‘ But why ? ’ she asked, — he only laughed, —  
‘ Why shall it be thus, now speak ! ’

‘ Because so like a bird art thou,  
 Thou must live within green trees,  
 With nightingales and thrushes and wrens,  
 And the humming of wild bees.’

*Oh, the shower and the sunshine every day  
 Pass and pass, be ye sad, be ye gay.*

‘ Nay, nay, you jest, no wren am I,  
 Nor thrush nor nightingale,  
 And rather would keep this arras and wall  
 ’Tween me and the wind’s assail.  
 I like to hear little Minnie’s gay laugh,  
 And the whistle of Japes the page,  
 Or to watch old Madge when her spindle twirls,  
 And she tends it like a sage.’

*Oh, the leaves, brown, yellow, and red, still fall,  
 Fall and fall over churchyard or hall.*

‘ Yea, yea, but thou art the world’s best Rose,  
 And about thee flowers I’ll twine,  
 And wall thee round with holly and beech,  
 Sweet-briar and jessamine.’

‘ Nay, nay, sweet master, I’m no Rose,  
 But a woman indeed, indeed,  
 And love many things both great and small,  
 And of many things more take heed.’

*Oh, the shower and the sunshine every day  
 Pass and pass, be ye sad, be ye gay.*

‘ Aye, sweetheart, sure thou sayest sooth,  
 I think thou art even so !  
 But yet needs must I dibble the hedge,  
 Close serried as hedge can grow.      •  
 Then Minnie and Japes and Madge shall be  
 Thy merry-mates all day long,  
 And thou shalt hear my bugle-call  
 For matin or even-song.’

*Oh, the leaves, brown, yellow, and red, still fall,  
 Fall and fall over churchyard or hall.*

Look yonder now, my blue-eyed bird,  
 See'st thou aught by yon far stream?  
 There shalt thou find a more curious nest  
 Than ever thou sawest in dream.’  
 She followed his finger, she looked in vain,  
 She saw neither cottage nor hall,  
 But at his beck came a litter on wheels,  
 Screened by a red silk caul ;  
 He lifted her in by her lily-white hand,  
 So left they the blythe sunny wall.

*Oh, the shower and the sunshine every day  
 Pass and pass, be ye sad, be ye gay.*

The gorse and ling are netted and strong,  
 The conies leap everywhere,  
 The wild briar-roses by runnels grow thick ;  
 Seems never a pathway there.

Then come the dwarf oaks knotted and wrung  
 Breeding apples and mistletoe,  
 And now tall elms from the wet mossed ground  
 Straight up to the white clouds go.

*Oh, the leaves, brown, yellow, and red, still fall,  
 Fall and fall over churchyard or hall.*

‘ O weary hedge, O thorny hedge !’  
 Quoth she in her lonesome bower,  
 ‘ Round and round it is all the same ;  
 Days, weeks, have all one hour ;  
 I hear the cushat far overhead,  
 From the dark heart of that plane ;  
 Sudden rushes of wings I hear,  
 And silence as sudden again.

*Oh, the shower and the sunshine every day  
 Pass and pass, be ye sad, be ye gay.*

‘ Maiden Minnie she mopes by the fire,  
 Even now in the warmth of June ;  
 I like not Madge to look in my face,  
 Japes now hath never a tune.  
 But, oh, he is so kingly strong,  
 And, oh, he is kind and true ;  
 Shall not my babe, if God cares for me,  
 Be his pride and his joy too ?

*Oh, the leaves, brown, yellow, and red, still fall,  
 Fall and fall over churchyard or hall.*

I lean my faint heart against this tree  
 Whereon he hath carved my name,  
 I hold me up by this fair bent bough,  
 For he held once by the same ;  
 But everything here is dank and cold,  
 The daisies have sickly eyes,  
 The clouds like ghosts down into my prison  
 Look from the barred-out skies.  
*Oh, the shower and the sunshine every day  
 Pass and pass, be ye sad, be ye gay.*

‘ I tune my lute and I straight forget  
 What I minded to play, woe’s me !  
 Till it feebly moans to the sharp short gusts  
 Aye rushing from tree to tree.  
 Often that single redbreast comes  
 To the sill where my Jesu stands ;  
 I speak to him as to a child ; he flies,  
 Afraid of these poor thin hands !  
*Oh, the leaves, brown, yellow, and red, still fall,  
 Fall and fall over churchyard or hall.*

‘ The golden evening burns right through  
 My dark chamber windows twain :  
 I listen, all round me is only a grave,  
 Yet listen I ever again.  
 Will he come ? I pluck the flower-leaves off,  
 And at each, cry, yes, no, yes !

I blow the down from the dry hawkweed,  
Once, twice, ah ! it flyeth amiss !  
*Oh, the shower and the sunshine every day*  
*Pass and pass, be ye sad, be ye gay.*

‘ Hark ! he comes ! yet his footstep sounds  
As it sounded never before !  
Perhaps he thinks to steal on me,  
But I’ll hide behind the door.’  
She ran, she stopped, stood still as stone—  
It was Queen Eleänore ;  
And at once she felt that it was death  
The hungering she-wolf bore !  
*Oh, the leaves, brown, yellow, and red, still fall,*  
*Fall and fall over churchyard or hall.*



*THE WITCH'S BALLAD.*

O, I HAE come from far away,  
 From a warm land far away,  
 A southern land across the sea,  
 With sailor-lads about the mast,  
 Merry and canny, and kind to me.

And I hae been to yon town,  
 To try my luck in yon town ;  
 Nort, and Mysie, Elspie too.  
 Right braw we were to pass the gate,  
 Wi' gowden clasps on girdles blue.

Mysie smiled wi' miminy mouth,  
 Innocent mouth, miminy mouth ;  
 Elspie wore her scarlet gown,  
 Nort's grey eyes were unco' gleg,  
 My Castile comb was like a crown.

We walked abreast all up the street,  
 Into the market up the street ;  
 Our hair with marygolds was wound,  
 Our bodices with love-knots laced,  
 Our merchandise with tansy bound.

Nort had chickens, I had cocks,  
    Gamesome cocks, loud-crowing cocks ;  
Mysie ducks, and Elspie drakes,—  
For a wee groat or a pound :  
We lost nae time wi' gives and takes.

Lost nae time, for well we knew,  
    In our sleeves full well we knew,  
When the gloaming came that night,  
Duck nor drake nor hen nor cock  
Would be found by candle-light.

And when our chaffering all was done,  
    All was paid for, sold and done,  
We drew a glove on ilka hand,  
We sweetly curtsied each to each,  
And deftly danced a saraband.

The market lasses looked and laughed,  
    Left their gear and looked and laughed ;  
They made as they would join the game,  
But soon their mithers, wild and wud,  
With whack and screech they stopped the same.

Sae loud the tongues o' randies grew,  
    The flitin' and the skirlin' grew,  
At all the windows in the place,  
Wi' spoons or knives, wi' needle or awl,  
Was thrust out every hand and face.

And down each stair they thronged anon,  
    Gentle, semple, thronged anon ;  
Souter and tailor, frowsy Nan,  
The ancient widow young again,  
Simpering behind her fan.

Without a choice, against their will,  
    Doited, dazed, against their will,  
The market lassie and her mither,  
The farmer and his husbandman,  
Hand in hand dance a' thegether.

Slow at first, but faster soon,  
    Still increasing wild and fast,  
Hoods and mantles, hats and hose,  
Blindly doffed and cast away,  
Left them naked, heads and toes.

They would have torn us limb from limb,  
    Dainty limb from dainty limb ;  
But never one of them could win  
Across the line that I had drawn  
With bleeding thumb a-widdershin.

But there was Jeff the provost's son,  
    Jeff the provost's only son ;  
There was Father Auld himsel',  
The Lombard frae the hostelry,  
And the lawyer Peter Fell.

All goodly men we singled out,  
    Waled them well, and singled out,  
And drew them by the left hand in ;  
Mysie the priest, and Elspie won  
The Lombard, Nort the lawyer carle,  
I mysel' the provost's son.

Then, with cantrip kisses seven,  
    Three times round with kisses seven,  
Warped and woven there spun we,  
Arms and legs and flaming hair,  
Like a whirlwind on the sea.

Like the wind that sucks the sea,  
    Over and in and on the sea,  
Good sooth it was a mad delight ;  
And every man of all the four  
Shut his eyes and laughed outright.

Laughed as long as they had breath,  
    Laughed while they had sense or breath ;  
And close about us coiled a mist  
Of gnats and midges, wasps and flies,  
Like the whirlwind shaft it rist.

Drawn up I was right off my feet,  
    Into the mist and off my feet ;  
And, dancing on each chimney-top,  
I saw a thousand darling imps  
Keeping time with skip and hop.

And on the provost's brave ridge-tile,  
    On the provost's grand ridge-tile,  
The Blackamoor first to master me  
I saw,—I saw that winsome smile,  
The mouth that did my heart beguile,  
And spoke the great Word over me,  
In the land beyond the sea.

I called his name, I called aloud,  
    Alas ! I called on him aloud ;  
And then he filled his hand with stour,  
And threw it towards me in the air ;  
My mouse flew out, I lost my pow'r !

My lusty strength, my power, were gone ;  
    Power was gone, and all was gone.  
He will not let me love him more !  
Of bell and whip and horse's tail  
He cares not if I find a store.

But I am proud if he is fierce !  
    I am as proud as he is fierce ;  
I'll turn about and backward go,  
If I meet again that Blackamoor,  
And he'll help us then, for he shall know  
I seek another paramour.

And we'll gang once more to yon town,  
    Wi' better luck to yon town ;  
We'll walk in silk and cramoisie,  
And I shall wed the provost's son ;  
My-lady of the town I'll be !

For I was born a crowned king's child,  
    Born and nursed a king's child,  
King o' a land ayont the sea,  
Where the Blackamoor kissed me first,  
And taught me art and glamourie.

Each one in her wame shall hide  
    Her hairy mouse, her wary mouse,  
Fed on madwort and agramie,—  
Wear amber beads between her breasts,  
And blind-worm's skin about her knee.

The Lombard shall be Elspie's man,  
    Elspie's gowden husband-man ;  
Nort shall take the lawyer's hand ;  
The priest shall swear another vow :  
We'll dance again the saraband !



The night waxed darker than before ;  
 Scarce could the windows be traced at all,  
 Only the sharp rain was heard rushing o'er ;  
 A sick sleeper moaned through the cloister wall,  
 And a horse neighed shrill from a distant stall,  
 And the sea sounded on.

'Are all the dear holy ones shut within,  
 That none descend in my strait?' said she ;  
 'Their songs are afar off, far off and thin,  
 The terrible sounds of the prison-house flee  
 About me, and the sound of the sea.'

Lights gleam from room to room.

Slowly a moonshine breaks over the glass,  
 The black and green witchcraft is there no more ;  
 It spreads and it brightens, and out of it pass  
 Four angels with glorified hair,—all four  
 With lutes ; and our Lord is in heaven's door.

Margaret ! they hail thee.

Her eyes are a-wide to the hallowèd light,  
 Her head is cast backward, her bosom is clad  
 With the flickering moonlight pale purple and  
 white ;  
 Away to the angels her spirit hath fled,  
 While her body still kneels,—but is it not dead ?  
 She is safe, she is well !



THE RENDEZVOUS.

‘ LAY my head upon thy neck,  
 My sister, ever so dear to me ;  
 Thy cool cheek on my burning brow,  
 And if I weep, you may not see.  
*The wind it lies i' the sedges.*

‘ In this low shieling down so far,  
 Below the bower where we were born,  
 He knows I'll wait to hear again  
 The sound o' his blythe bugle-horn.  
*The wind it sighs i' the sedges.*

‘ I hold him blameless now as then,  
 For love must bide with confidence,  
 And truth with trust I surely think,  
 Withouten question or defence.  
*The wind it sings i' the sedges.*

‘ Here, sheltered in the thick green shaw,  
 The day is long, the night is drear ;  
 But days and nights wear on until  
 The joy of his return is near.  
*The wind it clings to the sedges.*

## THE RENDEZVOUS.

‘ As I stood on the wrinkled shore  
The waves they sang of him to me,  
Here-away, there-away, wandering  
On the far side of the sea.

*Butterflies light on the sedges.*

‘ They said his dark days all were done,  
And that his ship was in full sail,  
With men on the deck and wealth below,  
And braws for me, the pick and wale.

*The lily is bright in the sedges.*

‘ So here I’ve come to this dear place,  
And yestere’en the high window,  
Where we in one bed children slept,  
I saw it shining in the glow.

*The small fish darts i’ the sedges.*

‘ It seemed in fancy I discerned  
The place where once our two heads lay,  
And I thought how oft you combed my hair,  
And dressed me many a day.

*The bittern starts i’ the sedges.*

‘ For thou wert ever a mother to me ;  
I, weak and wayward, scarce can tell  
How good thou wert,—and yet I went  
That dreadful night without farewell.

*The badger rattles the sedges.*

‘ But I so feared our father, Maud ;  
Love-wildered, I had lost my head :  
I feared still more that false Delue  
My father meant that I should wed.’  
*The bind-weed wattles the sedges.*

‘ Ah, well-a-day ! my sister May,  
I shrink from him as then you did ;  
For now he is to husband me,  
If I conform, as I am bid.’  
*The adder it hides i’ the sedges.*

‘ But that must never, never be ;  
Wise sister Maud, it shall not be :  
For, hark ! my true love’s bugle-note—  
I know it brings good cheer to me !’  
*Sunlight glides through the sedges.*

‘ Nay, ’tis but father’s hunting-horn,  
With horses, dogs, and false Delue !’  
‘ They also ! but by yon cross road  
There comes my love, and his men too !’  
*The wind again breaks i’ the sedges.*

‘ And now I know the hour shall strike,  
Cast out my child and I shall be ;  
Or false Delue’s last game is played ;—  
We’ll part no more, my love and me !’  
*The spring it awakes i’ the sedges.*

## THE RENDEZVOUS.

‘ Now they parley, man to man,—  
 Short speech, alas! for they must fight :  
 My Lionel and Delue,—at once  
 They draw their swords, so long and bright.  
*The fisherman watches the sedges.*

‘ My father and that stranger lord  
 Draw back the men each side the way,  
 Some here, some there, they stand in line,  
 Stand to look, as it were play !  
*The hurricane catches the sedges.*

‘ My sister Maud, now hold me up ;  
 I must stand here, I must look on,—  
 Holy Mary, soothe my child  
 Until this mortal strife be done !  
*The storm wind weighs on the sedges.*

‘ I must look on,—fear not for me ;  
 Full well I know his arm is strong :  
 I must look on,—full well I know  
 The struggle will not hold them long.  
*The wild wind lays down the sedges.*

‘ My child, my child ! so loud it cries,  
 I pressed it all too close to me ;  
 He hears it, and he turns this way,  
 His hand drops down beside his knee.  
*The lightning shatters the sedges.*

‘ Delue is closing on him now ;—  
My true, true love, it never can be !  
Take me, sister, in your arms ;  
I cannot hear, I cannot see.’

*The flood-tide scatters the sedges.*

‘ Lie down, lie down ! and let me watch :  
Delue goes back with deadly wound ;  
He tries in vain to lift his arm,—  
He falls—falls flat upon the ground.

*The rain it spurns the sedges.*

‘ Hear you, sister, what I say ?  
Shouts and steps approach the door :  
’Tis Lionel himself who lifts you,  
Gently lifts you from the floor !’

*Sunshine returns to the sedges.*

*I GO TO BE CURED AT AVILION:*

(To a Picture painted 1847.)

SILENTLY, swiftly the funeral barge  
Homeward bears the brave and good,  
His wide pall sweeping the murmuring marge,  
*Flowing to the end of the world.*

Kings' daughters watching round his head,  
His brazen breastplate wet with blood  
And tears by these kings' daughters shed,  
*Watching to the end of the world.*

A cresset of spices and sandal-wood  
Fills the wake with an odour rare ;  
Two swans lead dimly athwart the flood,  
*Lead on to the end of the world.*  
From the distant wold what brings the blast?  
The trump's recall, the watch-fire's glare,—  
Oh ! let these fade into the past,  
*As he fares to the end of the world.*

From the misty woods a holier sound—  
For the monks are singing their evensong—  
Swoons faintly o’er the harvest-ground,  
*As they pass to the end of the world.*

From the minster where the steep roofs are,  
The passing bell, that voice supreme,  
Sends a farewell faintly far,  
*As they fade to the end of the world.*

It is gone, it is closed, the last red gleam,  
Darkness shuts the fiery day ;  
Over the windless, boatless stream  
The odours and embers have died away :  
*They are gone to the end of the world.*



*ANTHONY.*

A. D. 1000.

'And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thy hand.'

JOB ii. 6.

'FATHER, my quiet life hath lain  
In the hollows where the dews and rain  
From one day into another remain,  
Cold and green. One sin alone  
Up through my peace like a thorn hath grown :



I have tried to be humble in vain ; I've thought  
 More of my gifts than a poor child ought ;  
 I have believed to me was given  
 The powers of the Saints—of miracles even ;  
 And I fear me Jesu hath sent his leaven  
 To burn away the crown of pride  
 That, try as I might, I never could hide.  
 And to bear the great God's chastening,  
 With the bodily sense, is a fearful thing !

' Father dear, last night I woke  
 As a hand was gently laid on me,  
 And a soft voice close beside me spoke :  
 " Good brother, brother Anthony,  
 A king is dying here close by,  
 And wants thy ghostly aid." I rose  
 Upon mine elbow 'mazedly ;  
 This beggar-voice, whose could it be?  
 Who could have come where no path goes,  
 Among the shingle and birks that close  
 My cell about? A faint light made  
 By the moon there was, and across it a shade  
 Moved ; from behind me a face right fair  
 Suddenly stooped, half hid by its hair,  
 Yet round the white brow might be seen  
 A fretted gold thread. " Come, brother," quoth he,  
 " Or death before us may have been "——  
 " Nay, I ween it must not be :

To deal out God's body to the dying,  
To sain the soul through the dark night flying,  
I'm powerless. I'm no priest : go round  
To the Clerk of Isenford." "That ground  
I travelled now ; but it is said  
That yesternight the clerk is dead."  
"Then mount ye the hill to the cenoby."  
"Time is too short," he made reply ;  
And got the better of me then,  
I thought myself singled out among men,  
Appointed by the Saints to do  
This holy thing : I rise and go ;  
The pax ye left last yule with me  
I put in my bosom hastily ;  
I follow him along by the river. Anon  
He opened a door in a garden wall,  
And muttered some words I can't recall,  
Then stept we down long steps of stone,  
Still down and evermore downwards—dark  
It was, and yet I heard, by chance,  
As we spoke together, the early lark ;  
Anon it seemed as if I must dance,  
Not walk, so giddy and light was I ;  
And then there seemed to be houses round,  
Unsteadily resting on the ground,  
As if they but seemed, and might change or fly ;  
With pictures were they painted o'er,  
And settles stood by every door.

Past these we went, I following him,  
The heavy heat making my head to swim  
As if I were drunken. Then came a sound,  
The regular chaunt of a litany—  
Doubtless to Hecat or Venus—and they  
Who chanted it were seen nowhere,  
Neither on ground nor in the air :  
Nor was there green field or blue sky,  
Or tree or stream, but all was brown,  
And flames like lamps leapt up and down :  
Nor saw I aught living in doublet or gown,  
Till we came to the market-place, where stood,  
Instead of a cross, an image of wood,  
A huge-faced image, with ass's ears,  
And horns and a tongue and eyes full of leers,  
Bodyless, only a block, whence grew  
Lopped arms and shameless parts—before  
The image flickered a flame dark blue,  
And round it, hand in hand, a score  
Of dark brown men and women ran,  
Naked as devils : I tried to ban ;  
I had no book or cross, but the pax,  
With the blessed body sealed in silver and wax !  
The pax was gone, and that was how  
They gained such power upon me now.  
My winsome guide laid hold on me,  
Capering as if his bare feet were on thorns ;  
But the beauty, I trow, was quite gone now—

I saw he too had horns !  
Oh, had I at the first but seen .  
The fire in his eye—oh, well had it been !  
Alas ! how they did pierce and play  
About me and into me, into my heart !  
And the place wherever he made them dart  
Was lit up by a quivering gleam,  
Like that from sunlit glass or stream.  
I turned and ran ; but round and round  
Still danced the fiends till I fell in a swoond,  
And I woke anon where about me, I trow,  
Was kingly ornament enow :  
On a couch of gold, on a tiger's hide,  
I lay, and a creature meek and mild,  
Wimpled like a sister of Transatide,  
Smoothed my hair down like a child,  
And laid my face against her side.  
Oh, but it was strange and new,  
The unrest that within me grew :  
I believed her a sister—some glamour,  
Some smoke of the pit, some nameless power,  
Was there ; but I prevailed at last !  
Her arms about my head she cast ;  
“I am a princess,” the serpent said,  
Ere you arrived was my father dead ;  
And you must now rule here, for I  
Can give you knowledge and sovereignty,  
With a crown to cover your tonsured head.”

Woe's me ! I listened, sorry and sad  
That she was a devil or I was mad :  
I lay still and listened, and then she drew  
From a small red distaff that stood by itself,  
And moved to her hand like a living elf,  
A fine green thread she cunningly threw  
Around me and round. Then a can of green flame  
Or of wine—I knew not whence it came—  
She called it wine—to my mouth she pressed,  
And whispered so softly, “ Drink now, and rest.”  
I was wearing to sleep, and my lips were dry ;  
A want, not of will, but of energy,  
Was saving me, till at last she sung—  
Thank thee, O thou foolish red tongue !  
Is there a better place over the sky ?  
Is there a fairer race living on high ?  
Is there a hell, can any man tell ?  
For he knoweth nought when the shroud is wrought ;  
But I've heard it said by the midday breeze,  
In the churchyard trees, and by the grey seas,  
Upon midsummer night, when the moon is in flight,  
That Paradise is but a shade  
Made by the evening clouds in the air,  
A delusion and a snare.  
So brother dear, oh, harbour here,  
And live with me ; for a mortal year  
Will be nothing to thee, if thou wilt not tine  
The offer of my bright green wine.

I tried right sore, but no word could say,  
While she touched me, that accursed May,  
With her thread and her wine,—I feared them now,  
And she knew the fear upon my brow ;  
I saw her trembling through her hair,  
And then at once I was aware  
That she was changed or gone ; for there,  
Instead of her, another stood,  
Also clad in a wimple and hood ;  
My book and my beads, with the little black rood,  
She held towards me, and she sung  
With a sharp clear voice, and a bright red tongue :  
    Nay, look not so, for it grieves us mo'  
    Than I can tell, and of heaven and hell,  
    What they are made of, and where they lie,  
    And how to find them by-and-by,  
    Thou shalt teach, and we shall hear—  
I broke upon her silly song  
By grasping at the hallowed gear ;—  
Ah, when I found it in my grasp,  
The rood was changed into an asp.  
But the thread was broken, and I was strong,  
For I struggled up and out of her reach ;  
I found my voice,—that vile asp tried  
To get into my mouth,—but three times I cried  
    Upon the name of Christ—the wall  
About me splits, and the devils fall  
And break like images of board,—  
Such is the power of the name of the Lord !

' Long I threaded the streets about,  
That I might find some pathway out ;  
Nor could I tell the west from east :  
So I was lost. By many a door  
Fallen, and many a settle before,  
The naked creatures broken lay,  
Like sculptor's fragments cast away.  
And yet their eyes could follow me,  
Although they could not move or turn ;  
I stumbled over them ; I could spurn  
Their breasts and limbs,—but those wide-open eyes !  
Ah, me ! at last I saw on high  
This hill against the morning sky ;—  
Was it not hard from thence to see  
This chapel at hand, and between it and me—  
Enchantment—like a wall of glass,  
It seemed I never, never could pass ?  
Then I remembered the spell whereby  
The possessed wherever they list can fly ;  
That spell brother Lupus, cursed be he !  
Brought from the pagans of Sicily :  
And I was lifted from the ground,  
Bats and ribbed things clipping me round,  
And thrown down ; then, oh ! such a race  
I ran,—for everything gave me chase,  
Wolves, moles, birds, stones, hosts of flies ;  
And the faces of women and men I know  
Died many and many a year ago,

Kept up with me, their white, light eyes  
Close to my face ; all vampires, so  
They bit my neck, they sucked my blood,  
They caught my ankles, they twisted my hood,  
And at last—at last they stole  
My senses ; without sense I ran,  
Like a jointed frame without a soul ;  
Yet I knew the joints, alas ! began  
To double and crack ;—but oh ! God's bliss !  
About my feet a stream doth hiss,  
The cold, running stream, and I am free,  
With daylight, father, and with thee !'

## II

When the stricken child had thus confessed,  
Humbly he crossed his hands on his breast,  
Waiting. The abbot raised his eye,  
That closed this half-hour had been,  
And answered : ' Thy name, Anthony,  
Was once borne by a Saint ; if so  
It be with thee as with him, and mo',  
Whom Jesu put in Satan's power  
To bait them for a day and hour,  
It doth behove thee back to go  
Into thy hermitage again ;  
And if from grace thou art astray,  
Anthony, gird thyself amain



With prayer and fast ; this penance do,  
And when thou vanquishest the foe,  
Thou shalt rule, and I obey !'

He turned about, but the kneeling man  
Caught the skirt of his camlet and began  
To wail like the stork in the fowler's hand :  
' Father ! aught but this demand  
Let me but live in the cenoby,  
And penance day and night I'll dree ;  
Send me not to live alone——'  
' The will of God, my will be done !'  
Querulously the old man cried,  
And thrust the penitent aside.

## III

The sound of their parting steps is gone,  
His heart sinks like his knees on the stone,  
The asperging drops still shine on his head,  
The smoke of the censer scarce is shed ;  
For they brought him hither with chant and bell,  
Relics and incense-pot as well.  
His long thin hands together are prest,  
Finger to finger before his breast  
Through their closed lids you may see  
His eyeballs moving restlessly,

As if he listened with shut eyes,  
For thus the senses sympathise !  
And now he sings, but far to find  
Is every rhyme he would unwind :

Thou wood of the cross of the agony,  
Ye nails that fixed Him to the tree,  
Sponge that held the last bitter draught,  
Lift, support, and strengthen me !

Drops of His sweating that eased His pain,  
Drops of blood, the parched world's rain,  
Tears that brought us man's second spring,  
Cleanse, absolve, absolve, and sain !

Mary's most holy eyes then lifted up,  
Angels most holy hands holding the cup,  
And Spirit most holy that then came down,  
Make my soul with ye to sup !

He stops, forgetting the rest ; the lamp  
Through its misty nimbus crackles ; a tramp  
Is heard without, a laugh and a call ;—  
He answers not : against the wall  
All round the bigging the knocking goes,  
From west to east as a witch-dance flows :  
Then up on the thatch it begins to scratch ;  
There's a long thin line seen crossing the shrine,  
Mistier still in the thickening damp ;

By its dainty thread right over his head,  
A spider spins, for a moment it stops,  
Then right upon his bald head drops.  
Ah! he comes as he came before,—  
Only since they sprinkled the latch,  
And set that cross upon the door,  
He must enter by the thatch!  
Anthony fell like a murdered man,  
And that long-legged imp-spiderling ran  
Over his face: now raised on his hands  
He stares about, the hour-glass stands  
Right upon end with its drizzling sands,  
And the friendly mort-head, round and round  
Rolls about with a crazy sound,  
A gasping creak, it tries to speak,  
Eyeballs from its caves gleam out!  
The horns—the horns begin to sprout!

Next morn betimes they came to see  
How fared their young brother Anthony,  
But he was gone, nor could they trace  
His footsteps nor his resting-place.

## IV

'Tis well to spend the wintry day  
Of age from tumults quite away:  
When love is past, and we leave off strife,  
Having long borne our lots in life.

Answering the daily need,  
With brand and buckler to conquer or bleed ;  
Or for the burgher's watch so drear,  
Filling the wallet with good cheer,  
Or in the booth or market-stand  
Where moil befits both tongue and hand :  
But work is heavy from morn to eve,  
With sorrow still watching behind like a reeve,  
And the only shelter sure and fair  
Is the cloister and cowl to the man of care,  
To the man upon whom the great black hand  
Of chastening waxeth tight, whose head  
Is bowed, so he no more can stand  
In the guild-hall he aforetime led.  
Nor less to him who wickedly  
Seeketh temptations, the lusts of the eye  
And the pride of life ; for surely God  
Lends the heart a worm, the back a rod,  
To punish those forgetting Him ;  
And His punishments are grim !  
Abasing the haughty in velvet and fur,  
Who hold their foreheads against the thunder,  
And laugh to see the patched poor wonder,  
Who travel with riders before and behind,  
Riding over the halt and blind,  
Who empty the stoup with the wassailer,  
Over the chamber of the dying,—  
Who wear the night with dice and lying,

Lying and cursing over the dice,  
And to the chirp of the violette,  
With a headless amorette  
Dance until the cock crows thrice.

There was a time when Saints were rife,  
Whose cross was ever their staff of life ;  
From Camelot to Egypt's river,  
Blessings fell from Gabriel's quiver ;  
Nor was it wonderful to see  
The holy rood stoop down to greet  
The worshipper whose heart was sweet,  
Whose deeds and thoughts did well agree,—  
Who never dropt his beads to scratch,  
Though his cassock was as coarse as thatch :  
This age was likened to the sun  
Upholding life since time begun.

Then glorious still, though glorious less,  
The second age of holiness,  
Was likened to the harvest-moon,  
Whose sweet white face doth wane so soon.

Then came the third last age of light ;  
Darker it was, yet grand and bright,  
Like the company of stars by night.

But sun, and moon, and stars are gone,  
And we the watchers left alone -

With no more cheer than candlewick  
Through a horn lantern, yellow and thick.  
So now in the race, for one who wins,  
Six shall stumble with wounded shins ;  
For the rood is stiff whoever kneels,  
And God never stops His chariot wheels,  
Nor looks out of His narrow window,  
Over the drifts and steeps of snow ;  
But Satan for a thousand years  
Has gotten a lease of our hopes and fears—  
To catch men's souls by their eyes and ears.  
Let us everyone beware  
Little faith or overcaring,  
Pride of heart or overdaring,  
Lest we come within his snare.

In after years on that spot grew  
Cloisters of stone all fair and new :  
And Camaldules at least five-score  
Lived where these few had housed before ;  
Then in the guest-hall oft was told  
This story of the times of old,  
And of a beggar-man, who lay  
With crutch and cup by night and day,  
Begging and muttering before  
Saint Peter's great west door.  
This beggar, when aught was flung in his cup,  
If 'twas not silver would grumble and grutch,

And strive to raise his body up,  
To reach the almoner with his crutch !  
T'ien as the midnight struck, they said,  
He lay stretched out as if he were dead,  
When a hornèd stranger, strong and grim,  
Through the locked city-gate came toward him,  
And took his daily spoils away.  
Some thought him a Saint, and gave him food  
Day by day, as Christians should ;  
But others averred that Satan had  
Sworn him his slave and driven him mad,  
And that his name was Anthony.  
But whether he was the same who fled  
From his cell that night can never be said.

*LOVE'S CALENDAR.*

THAT gusty spring, each afternoon

By the ivied cot I passed,

And noted at that lattice soon

Her fair face downward cast ;

Still in the same place seated there,

So diligent, so very fair.

Oft-times I said I knew her not,

Yet that way round would go,

Until, when evenings lengthened out,

And bloomed the may-hedge row,

I met her by the wayside well,

Whose waters, maybe, broke the spell.

For, leaning on her pail she prayed

I'd lift it to her head,

So did I ; but I'm much afraid

Some wasteful drops were shed,

And that we blushed, as face to face

Needs must we stand the shortest space.



Then when the sunset mellowed through  
    The ears of rustling grain,  
When lattices wide open flew,  
    When ash-leaves fell like rain,  
As well as I she knew the hour  
At morn or eve I neared her bower.

And now that snow o'erlays the thatch,  
    Each starlit eve within  
The door she waits, I raise the latch,  
    And kiss her lifted chin ;  
Nor do I think we've blushed again,  
For Love hath made but one of twain.

*A BRIDAL RACE.*

SIR HUBERT mounted his little brown barb,  
 Her jennette of Spain his bride ;  
 ‘ My winsome Isabelle, my wife,’  
 Quoth he, ‘ let’s a wager ride !’

Quoth he, ‘ Sweet wife, let us ride a race,  
 And this shall be the play,  
 Whoever wins first to yon haw-tree,  
 Shall do even as they may.

‘ And whether we live in the country,  
 Or in town as I would still,  
 Whoever wins first to yon haw-tree  
 Shall have it as they will.’

‘ Done !’ said she with a light high laugh,  
 ‘ I’m pleased with such as this ;  
 Let us sign the ‘pact !’ She leant across,  
 As if she meant to kiss.

He thought to catch her limber waist,  
And really a kiss repay,  
But she gave her jennette the rein at once ;  
She was off, she was away.

The little brown barb he shied aside,  
On galloped she merrilie,  
The race was short and she was the first,  
First by the red haw-tree.

‘ Now fie upon you, winsome wife ! ’  
Cried he, ‘ you ride unfair,  
For with that feint, that start too soon,  
You took me unaware.’

‘ What’s fair,’ quoth she with her light high laugh,  
‘ I do not care three straws !  
Oh, I shall rule, yes, I shall rule,  
But you, love, shall make the laws ! ’

*PARTING AND MEETING AGAIN.*

LAST time I parted from my dear  
 The linnet sang from the briar-bush,  
                     The throstle from the dell ;  
 The stream too carolled full and clear,  
 It was the spring-time of the year,  
 And both the linnet and the thrush  
                     I love them well,  
 Since last I parted from my dear.

But when he came again to me  
 The barley rustled high and low,  
                     Linnet and thrush were still ;  
 Yellowed the apple on the tree,  
 'Twas autumn merry as it could be,  
 What time the white ships come and go  
                     Under the hill ;  
 They brought him back again to me,  
 Brought him safely o'er the sea.

*LOVE.*

I LEFT the city gates. Through paths of sward,  
Where never cloud of dust had fallen, I reached  
An opening in a wall of sapling boughs ;  
I entered, and within more still and cool  
It was, and freshness through the air exhaled  
From the green ground. Half dusk it was, for round  
And round the branches wove a screen from heaven  
Of darkest green and varied leaf, 'neath which  
Flies thickly humming danced. Sometimes a bird  
Flew straightway through, and as its wing might brush  
The leaves about your head, it seemed to fear  
That it had missed its way. Flowers too were there,  
Sprinkled about amidst the grass which grows  
Hair-like and thin beneath the shade ; bluebells  
Tinkling to the small breeze a bee might cause,  
And violets, and poppies red and rough  
In stem. I passed still deeper through the wood  
By this cool path : a wood more kindly cool,  
Or harmless of dank poisons or vile beasts  
That creep, there cannot be, and yet so wild  
And uncouth. Bushes of dusk fruit beside

The pathway from the ground piled up two walls  
Of leaves and berries, from which flocked the birds  
As I passed on, or lingered with dyed hands  
Plucking them listless, and with profuse waste  
Pressing their juice out. Other trees were there  
Blossoming for a later month. And now,  
As from the populous harvest field came sounds  
Of hearty laughter, till by distance lost,  
And then again heard, as the reapers turned,  
A snatch of song, a very pleasant sound,  
Beneath a clear sky and thick boughs, a sound  
Right happy. So I also sang. The sun  
Then found an opening through the stems, to fall  
Upon my path ; and as I walked across  
The flowers upon my right my shadow passed.

A butterfly with purple-velvet wings,  
Invested with two lines of dusky gold  
And spotted with red spots, upon these flowers  
Was feeding, and anon as my shade fell  
Upon it, it flew up and went before,  
Lighting again until I passed : and so  
Continued it. The space more closed and closed  
Became, and all between the trees were warped,  
Hop-twigs and bindweed running far. Beneath,  
A slow stream likewise glent, and secretly  
Fed spreading water-lilies, and long reeds  
Heavy with seed, which might have made fair pipes,

Cut nicely by the joints, from whence a leaf  
 Depended. But I thought not of the task,  
 Watching my guide's dark wings, until the path  
 Seemed stayed by dense convolvulus and may,  
 (Largely o'ergrown without the pruner's hands)  
 And wild white rose. But the dark sphynx-fly lowered  
 Its flight till nigh the ground, and passed into  
 The mass of greenery by an interspace  
 Unseen before ; with both my hands I raised,  
 And parted with my head, full lazily,  
 The luscious screen at this same interspace.

Behold ! beneath a peristyle I stand  
 Of short columnar palms, before me steps  
 Of fine-shorn grass descend unto a space  
 Carpeted, curtained, looped with garlands too,  
 And set all round with woven seats of boughs  
 Cut roughly from the forest, over which  
 Uptangling richly to the highest trees,  
 And waving then even into the air,  
 Were rare and unknown flowers, and round a fount  
 (Of which a marble girl, with green feet through  
 The water and white head, seemed Nymph) bright  
     heaps  
 Of lily blooms were strewn. But all these things  
 After the first delight were nought to me ;  
 I was aware of some one near, whose life  
 The whole seemed imitative of, whose smile

The light seemed intimating to the flowers,  
Whose graciousness all round seemed fashioned by.  
Quite passively I stretched upon the sward,  
Mazed by this unknown beauty, and the swarms  
Of moths like that which here had guided me,  
And then the influence became more clear,  
More fixed, and I beheld a Lady. Round  
Her hand, which held some sweet, the insects thronged,  
And lighted on her hair. I did not start  
With rapture nor surprise, nor did I deem  
Myself unworthy of this gardened love,  
This goddess-girl, nor said she aught to me ;  
But by her eyes, which never looked on me,  
I said she was the spirit of my life,  
And tho' I had not seen her until now,  
I still had known her.

She bent down beside  
The sward I pressed ; she leant on the rude seat  
Over me ; but I knew not from that hour,  
Whether it was myself I gazed upon,  
Or whether I beheld with love intense  
And sympathy some higher beings, both  
Worthy of each. And she began to sing ;  
A language which was song was hers,—she sang ;  
A fragile lute upon her knees she placed,  
And, balanced from her neck by cord of silk,  
Her fingers gave it speech, yet touched it not,



But her hands hovered o'er it like two birds  
With wings still fluttering to descend,—she played.  
Soft as the fine tints of a rainbow bound  
About a shower that fell not : first her voice  
Came on my sense, but scarce articulate ;  
Then, waxing louder, it ascended heaven  
With all its colours brightening. My heart  
Is stilled to sleep as a maid stills a child  
That murmurs not, but looks still upward on  
The watching smile, till its eyes close at last  
Unconsciously. But suddenly the notes  
Began to whirl together as a flight  
Of swallows, and then louder still became,  
Happy beyond all words ; fair spirits seemed  
Clamorous and clapping of their hands for joy !  
Too happy beyond words, I would have wept  
Had I been in the actual world, where tears  
Are bred by stranger sympathy ; but here,  
Where sympathy was life, I did not weep.  
Lady and child at once ! I could weep now !  
But then the dark hair of thy song fell down,  
The eyelid of thy music dropt : it plained  
Faintly, and saturated with sweet pain,  
Carried my soul into a void grey realm  
Of everlasting melancholy. Maid !  
Who mournest for thy lover, hear the lay  
And be not comforted, but mourn no more  
As you have mourned. Youth ! whose thirsting love

Has conjured an ideal from the land  
Of Vision, listen with a joyous hope  
And mourn not with the bitterness that thou  
Hast mourned.

A louder chord is struck ! let grief at once  
Be wept out like a thunder-rain, and pride  
Go up triumphant with a purple flush,  
And warn of trump—the golden crown doth press  
The spirit's forehead who hath conquered all !—  
—O Lady, thou art wondrous fair and good !  
The earth is filled, oh ! filled with gracious things.  
Slowly again to life descends thy strain,  
An odour as of rose-leaves seems to fall  
Upon me, and a pearly light : behold !  
Art thou not as a goddess over me ?  
Oh, intermit thy strong-linked power—oh, cease !  
And let me drink a silence short and deep,  
Then die into the Life that thou dost live.



OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

SONNETS.



## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## I

*BIRTH.*

I STOOD before the veil of the Unknown,  
 And round me in this life's dim theatre  
 Was gathered a whole townfolk, all astrir  
 With various interludes : I watched alone,  
 And saw a great hand lift the veil, then shone,  
 Descending from the innermost expanse,  
 A goddess to whose eyes my heart at once  
 Flew up with awe and love, a love full-blown.

Naked and white she was, her fire-girt hair  
 Eddied on either side her straight high head,  
 Swaddled within her arms in lambent flame,  
 An unborn life, a child-soul, did she bear,  
 And laid it on a young wife's breast and fled,  
 Yet no one wondered whence the strange gift  
 came !

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## II

*DEATH.*

AGAIN that stage was vacant, that dusk crowd  
Was murmuring as before : again that hand  
Gathered the curtain ; I saw rise and stand  
Against the inmost blackness like a cloud,  
No feature seen, but o'er his brows a proud  
Spiked crown that held the thick mist clothing him,  
A strong imperious creature, tall and slim,  
And hateful too, thus hid within that shroud.

Stooping he raised within his long thin arms  
A scared old man and rolled him up, and fled :  
And all the crowd shrieked out, and muttering charms,  
Threw down their fiddle-bows and merchandise,—  
Around the stark corpse knelt with suppliant cries,  
Nor ceased still wondering where was gone—the  
dead !

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## III

*LIFE.*

YOUNG men and maidens, darkling, pair by pair,  
Travelled a road cut through an ancient wood :  
It was a twilight in a warm land, good  
To dwell in ; the path rose up like a stair,  
And yet they never ceased, nor sat down there ;  
Above them shone brief glimpses of blue sky,  
Between the black boughs plumed funereally,  
Before them was a faint light, faint but fair.

Onward they walked, onward I with them went,  
Expecting some thrice-welcome home would show  
A hospitable board, and baths and rest ;  
But still we looked in vain, all hopes were spent,  
No home appeared ; and still they onward go,  
I too, footweary traveller, toward the West.

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## IV

*GAIN AND LOSS.*

OFT-TIMES we consummate our fond desires,  
 Nor seldom does the strong man seize his prize,  
 But ere that day comes expectation dies ;  
 Fruition is not like what Hope inspires,  
 No more than are the ashes like the fires  
 That shed them : when we start upon the road,  
 Arcadia blooms somewhere, the blest abode  
 Of nymphs and perfect men, till, by surprise,  
 Noon strikes the bell, and all around remains  
 The same sad commonplace ; nor are we grieved,  
 Our staff unworn, our scrip with numerous gains  
 Refilled,—with Patience, cleansed eyes undeceived,  
 Silence of heart, meekness to match our fate ;  
 Experience guides us on, but shuts the golden gate.



## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

v

*LOOKING FORWARD.*

How very strangely are these travellers made !  
 Happily with no choice but still to live,  
 Weaving and shaping, so to be arrayed,  
 Crying to nature, Stay ! to fate, Give, give !  
 Still hastening towards to-morrow, when to-day  
 Fails to bring forth, from its too numerous toils  
 And manifold emotions, those great spoils  
 Wherewith to build a tower of strength and stay  
 Reaching to heaven. Alas ! we only find  
 To-morrow like to-day, with the same sky,  
 Silent and blue, silent and dark and high ;  
 The only changes, thunder, storm, and wind .  
 And round us rise still, darkening all the air,  
 Groves we have reared, that only blossoms bear.

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

VI

*HOPE DEFERRED. .*

COURAGE of heart and hand, Faith first of all :  
 Such is the prayer of the perplexèd man,  
 As the storm-scattered blossoms round him fall,  
 And shrinking from the rod and from the ban  
 Of starless chance. Prayer prompted by desires  
 For mastery and godhead sense denies,  
 And by sky-pointing mediæval spires,  
 Symbols of creeds the beaten hound still tries  
 To shelter under in this pilgrimage,  
 Passing from birth to death. But let us hear  
 What Nature, cruel mother ! says so sage,—  
 Still listening if perchance gods interfere—  
 ‘ Gain faith and courage through self-harmony,  
 And live your lives, nor only live to die.’

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## VII

*FAITH.*

‘ FOLLOW Me,’ Jesus said ; and they uprose,  
 Peter and Andrew rose and followed Him,  
 Followed Him even to heaven through death most  
 grim,

And through a long hard life without repose,  
 Save in the grand ideal of its close.

‘ Take up your cross and come with Me,’ He said ;  
 And the world listens yet through all her dead,  
 And still would answer had we faith like those.

But who can light again such beacon-fire !

With gladsome haste and with rejoicing souls—  
 How would men gird themselves for the emprise ?  
 Leaving their black boats by the dead lake’s mire,  
 Leaving their slimy nets by the cold shoals,  
 Leaving their old oars, nor once turn their eyes.

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## VIII

*AT PRESENT.*

BUT what have we instead? Shelves, miles on miles  
 Of books, in all the tongues, from all the years  
 Since fabulous Babel's topless tower appears  
 Through the heroic mist: Museums, piles  
 Of fragments, dead faiths' and dead learnings' spoils:  
 And in the study, victory crowns the hair  
 Of our new Hercules, the young, the fair,  
 ANALYSIS, untired for all his toils.

And what besides? the church bells ring at one  
 With custom as respect requires at home;  
 Abroad, in cap-and-bells their long ears pent,  
 Fools go on pilgrimage with knaves; at Rome  
 A blind, self-styled Infallible, old man,  
 Coaxes 'God's mother' with a monument!

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## IX

*SELF-DECEPTION.*

THERE'S a Seër's peak on Ararat, they say,  
 From which we can descry the better world ;  
 Not that supernal kingdom whence were hurled  
 The rebel-angels ere Creation's day,  
 But Eden-garden, Adam's first array,  
 Round which the Flood-waves stood back like a wall,  
 And whither still are sent the souls of all  
 The good dead, where the cherubim sing and play.

Dear lovely land we wait for and desire,  
 Whence fondly-loved lost faces look back still,  
 Waiting for us, so distant and apart ;  
 But from the depth between what mists aspire—  
 What wrinkled sea rolls severing hill from hill—  
 Vision ! 'tis but a reflex of the heart !

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

x

*CONTENTMENT IN THE DARK.*

WE asked not to be born : 'tis not by will  
     That we are here beneath the battle-smoke,  
 Without escape ; by good things as by ill,  
     By facts and mysteries enchain'd : no cloak  
 Of an Elijah, no stairs whereupon  
     Angels ascending and descending shine  
 Over the head here pillow'd on a stone,  
     Anywhere found ;—so say they who repine.  
 But each year hath its harvest, every hour  
     Some melody, child-laughter, strengthening strife,  
 For mother Earth still gives her child his dower,  
     And loves like doves sit on the boughs of life.

Ought we to have whate'er we want, in sooth ?  
     To build heaven-reaching towers, find Jacob's stair ;  
 Alchemists' treasures, everlasting youth,  
     Or aught that may not stand our piercing air ?

Nay, even these are ours, but only found  
By Poet in those fabulous vales, due east,  
Where grows the amaranth in charmèd ground ;  
And he it was thenceforth became the Priest,  
And raised Jove's altar when the world was young :  
He too it was, in Prophet's vesture stoled,  
Spake not but sang until life's roof-tree rung,  
And we who hear him still are crowned with gold.

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## XI

*THE UNIVERSE VOID.*

REVOLVING worlds, revolving systems, yea,  
     Revolving firmaments, nor there we end :  
     Systems of firmaments revolving, send  
 Our thought across the Infinite astray,  
 Gasping and lost and terrified, the day  
     Of life, the goodly interests of home,  
     Shrivelled to nothing ; that unbounded dome  
 Peeling still on, in blind fatality.

No rest is there for our soul's wingèd feet,  
     She must return for shelter to her ark—  
 The body, fair, frail, death-born, incomplete,  
     And let her bring this truth back from the dark :  
 Life is self-centred, man is nature's god ;  
 Space, time, are but the walls of his abode.



## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## XII

*SPIRITUAL LONGINGS UNANSWERED.*

SELF-CENTRED, self-illuminated, from our eyes  
 Life shines out on the spheres of other lives ;  
 Giving, exchanging, filling sweet-celled hives  
 Of memory ; sense transformed in heavenly wise  
 And made divine ; do we not formalise  
 The Beautiful, the Good, the Just ? and so  
 The flower-crowned loves and friendships round us  
     grow,  
 Whose choral voices echo to the skies.

But still the questing beast goes forth, we cry  
 Whence came we at the first ? from what soil grew  
 This endless Reason that aspires so high ?  
 Where go we ? useless questions these appear,  
 For we know nought of that dark sun, the TRUE,  
 Whose latent heats create our spiritual year.

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

## XIII

*DEVELOPMENT IN NATURE.*

WALLED up in sense, we know no general plan :  
     Æons long past creative power went on,  
     Evolving lights and forces round the throne,  
 And in the ordered nucleus of the plan  
 Blossomed and brightened the umbrageous span  
     Of this our world, beneath the Fates' fell care,  
     The Tree of Life outspreading everywhere,  
 And seedling fruits from short-lived blooms began.

Have these old mysteries ceased? from fiery steeps,  
     From deepening swamps the mute snake writhed  
     along ;  
 Anon the bird screamed—then the furred beast creeps  
     Growling ; then Adam speaks erect and strong.  
 Shall there not rise again from Nature's deeps  
     One more, whose voice shall be the perfect song ?

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

XIV

*SCIENCE ABORTIVE.*

WITH what vain speculations do we slake  
     The mental thirst ! What matter, cycles hence,  
     If higher creatures at mankind's expense  
 Start into life with senses broad awake  
 To truths we only dream of ; hands to shake  
     The pillars of the temple we but grope  
     Feebly about, who will gain entrance, cope  
 With the dæmon, and all prison-fetters break ?

The churchyard dust a thousand times blown wide  
     Would see them, hear them not ; the question men  
     Ten hundred various creeds and gods have raised  
 To answer, by Death's door we must abide ;  
     Blinded by life itself, by fears half-crazed,  
     We raise another god and ask again !

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

xv

*ONENESS OF ALL.*

(PEBBLES IN THE STREAM.)

UPON this rustic bridge on this warm day  
 We rest from our too-thoughtful devious walk ;  
 Over our shadows its melodious talk  
 The stream continues, while oft-times a stray  
 Dry leaf drops down where these bright waters play  
 In endless eddies, through whose clear brown deep  
 The gorgeous pebbles quiver in their sleep ;  
 The stream still flows, but cannot flow away.

Could I but find the words that would reveal  
 The unity in multiplicity,  
 And the profound strange harmony I feel  
 With these dead things, God's garments of to-day ;  
 The listener's soul with mine they would anneal,  
 And make us one within eternity.

## OUTSIDE THE TEMPLE.

XVI

*A SYMBOL.*

AT early morn I watched, scarce consciously,  
 Through the half-opened casement the high screen  
 Of our trees touched now by the bright'ning sheen  
 Of the ascending sun : the room was grey  
 And dim, with old things filled this many a day,  
 Closing me in, but those thick folds of trees  
 Shone in the fresh light, trembled in the breeze :  
 A shadow crossed them on its arrowy way  
 Cast by a flying bird I could not see ;  
 Then called a voice far off that seemed to say,  
 Come, we are here ! Such might or might not be  
 What the voice called, but then methought I knew  
 I was a soul new-born in death's dark clay,  
 Awakening to another life more true.

END.

## PARTED LOVE.

## I

*THE PAST.*

METHINKS I have passed through some dreadful door,  
 Shutting off summer and its sunniest glades  
 From a dank waste of marsh and ruinous shades :  
 And in that sunlit past, one day before  
 All other days is crimson to the core ;  
 That day of days when hand in hand became  
 Encircling arms, and with an effluent flame  
 Of terrible surprise, we knew love's lore.

The rose-red ear that then my hand caressed,  
 Those smiles bewildered, that low voice so sweet,  
 The truant threads of silk about the brow  
 Dishevelled, when our burning lips were pressed  
 Together, and the temple-pulses beat !  
 All gone now—where am I, and where art thou ?

## PARTED LOVE.

## II

*THE PRESENT.*

No cypress-wreath nor outward signs of grief ;  
     But I may cry unto the morn, and flee  
     After the god whose back is turned to me,  
 And touch his wings and plead for some relief ;  
 Draw, it may be, a black shaft from his sheaf :—  
     For now I know his quiver harbours those  
     Death mixed with his, as the old fable shows,  
 When he slept heedless on the red rose leaf.  
 And I may open Memory's chamber-door  
 To grope my way around its noiseless floor,  
     Now that, alas! its windows give no light,  
 Nor gentle voice invites me any more ;  
     For she is but a picture faintly bright  
     Hung dimly high against the walls of night.

## PARTED LOVE.

## III

*MORNING.*

LAST night,—it must have been a ghost at best,—  
 I did believe the lost one's slumbering head  
 Filled the white hollows of the curtained bed,  
 And happily sank again to sound sweet rest,  
 As in times past with sleep my nightly guest,  
 A guest that left me only when the day  
 Showed me a fairer than Euphrosyne,—  
 Day that now shows me but the unfilled nest.

O night ! thou wert our mother at the first,  
 Thy silent chambers are our homes at last ;  
 And even now thou art our bath of life.  
 Come back ! the hot sun makes our lips athirst ;  
 Come back ! thy dreams may recreate the past ;  
 Come back ! and smooth again this heart's long strife.



## PARTED LOVE.

## IV

*BY THE SEA-SIDE.*

REST here, my heart, nor let us further creep ;  
 Rest for an hour, I shall again be strong,  
 And make for thee another little song :  
 Rest here, and look down on the tremulous deep  
 Where sea-weeds like dead mænad's long locks sweep  
 Over that dreadful floor of stagnant green,  
 Stewed with the bones of lovers that have been,  
 Nor even yet can scarce be said to sleep.

Beyond that sea, far o'er that wasteful sea,  
 The sunset she so oft hath seen with me  
 Flames up with all the arrogances of gold,  
 Scarlet and purple, while the west-wind falls  
 Upon us with its deadliest winter-cold ;—  
 Shall we slide down ? I think the dear one calls !

## PARTED LOVE.

v

*EVENING.*

As in a glass at evening, dusky-grey,  
 The faces of those passing through the room  
 Seem like ghost-transits thwart reflected gloom,  
 Thus, darling image ! thou, so long away,  
 Visitest sometimes my darkening day :  
 Other friends come ; the toy of life turns round,  
 The glittering beads change with their tinkling  
 sound,  
 Whilst thou in endless youth sit'st silently.

How vain to call time back, to think these arms  
 Again may touch, may shield, those shoulders soft  
 And solid, never more my eyes can see :  
 But yet, perchance—(*speak low*)—beyond all harms,  
 I may walk with thee in God's other croft,  
 When this world shall the darkling mirror be.



# THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE

(PENKILL, AYRSHIRE).



## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

## I

*THE BOWER.*

IN the old house there is a chamber high,  
 Diapered with wind-scattered plane-tree leaves ;  
 And o'er one corbelled window that receives  
 The sunrise we've inscribed right daintily,  
 ' Come, O fair Morn, fulfilling prophecy !'  
 Over another, western watch doth keep,  
 Is writ, ' O Eve, bring thou the nursling Sleep !'  
 Adorning the old walls as best we may.

For up this bower-stair, in long-vanished years,  
 The bridegroom brought his bride and shut the door ;  
 Here, too, closed weary eyes with kindred tears,  
 While mourners' feet were hushed upon the floor :  
 And still it seems these old trees and brown hills  
 Remember also our past joys and ills.

## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

## II

*A SPRING MORNING.*

VAGUELY at dawn within the temperate clime  
Of glimmering half-sleep, in this chamber high,  
I heard the jackdaws in their loopholes nigh,  
Fitfully stir : as yet it scarce was time  
Of dawning, but the nestlings' hungry chime  
Awoke me, and the old birds soon had flown ;  
Then was a perfect lull, and I went down  
Into deep slumber beneath dreams or rhyme.

But, suddenly renewed, the clamouring grows,  
The callow beaklings clamouring every one,  
The grey-heads had returned with worm and fly ;  
I looked up and the room was like a rose,  
Above the hill-top was the brave young sun,  
The world was still as in an ecstasy.

## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

## III

*MOTTOES.*

THERE is a motto painted on each beam  
 That holds the roof-tree up from wall to wall,  
 'Neath which we pass the pleasantest hours of all :  
 And round the cornice is a frieze where teem  
 Numberless naked children, who, 'twould seem,  
 Can do all kinds of work, and, strange to say,  
 Can do it all as if it were but play :  
 These are among the mottoes, LOVE the theme :—  
 ' Dan Cupid's wisdom keeps pace with his wealth ;'  
 Because his wealth is wisdom, says the dear :  
 ' Dan Cupid like all gods can disappear ;'  
 But this was quite effaced one night by stealth :  
 ' Dan Cupid flies while Hercules can but run ;'  
 And this my lady's damsels call great fun.

## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

## IV

*BELOW THE OLD HOUSE.*

BENEATH those buttressed walls with lichens grey,  
 Beneath the slopes of trees whose flickering shade  
 Darkens the pools by dun green velvettèd,  
 The stream leaps like a living thing at play,—  
 In haste it seems ; it cannot, cannot stay !  
 The great boughs changing there from year to year,  
 And the high jackdaw-haunted eyes, still hear  
 The burden of the rivulet—Passing away !

And some time certainly that oak no more  
 Will keep the winds in check ; his breadth of beam  
 Will go to rib some ship for some far shore ;  
 Those quoins and eves will crumble, while that stream  
 Will still run whispering, whispering night and day,  
 That over-song of father Time—Passing away !



## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

v

*THE MOON.*

How often and how vainly do we try  
To paint in words the dying of the day!  
Coming repose ennobling us, the play  
Of fretted fire and gold afar and nigh.  
This night seen from that western casement high,  
It was so terribly fair with cloudlet-sheaves,  
Amber and ruby burning through the leaves,  
I said once more, It must not pass me by!

But when another hour the clock had told,  
I went to look again, and saw framed there,  
By fringing ivy like carved jet, the sky,  
The void sky, silver-bright, so vast, so cold,  
The faint moon round as is Eternity,—  
I quite forgot the sunset's splendid glare.

## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

## VI

*THE GARDEN.*

THE old house garden grows old-fashioned flowers,  
 Sheltered by hedges of the close yew-tree,  
 Through which, as Chaucer says, no wight may see ;  
 The sunflowers rise aloft like beacon towers,  
 Their large discs fringed with flames ; and corner  
 bowers

There are of mountain-ash, and the wild rose  
 Short-lived, blue star-flowers that at evening close  
 Spring there ; sweet herbs and marigolds in showers ;  
 Gilly-flowers too, dark crimson and nigh white ;  
 Pied poppies, and the striped grass, differing still  
 In each long leaf, though children ever will  
 Believe in finding two shall match aright.  
 The paths are edged with box grown broad and high,  
 At evening sheltering moths of various dye.

## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

## VII

*IN THE GARDEN.*

## I

THIS afterglow of summer wears away :

Russet and yellowing boughs bend everywhere,  
 Languid in noontide, and the rose-trees bear  
 Buds that will never open ; this long day  
 Hath been so still, so warm, so lucidly  
 White, like shadowless days in heaven I ween,  
 A moment by God lengthened it hath been,—  
 As Time shall be no more at last, they say.

Let us sit here ! there is no bird to sing ;

Not even the aspen quivers ; faintly brown,  
 The great trees hang around us in a ring ;  
 Never shall snow or storm again come down,  
 And never shall we be again footsore,  
 But live in this enchantment ever more.

## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

VIII

*IN THE GARDEN.*

II

HAPPINESS sometimes hath a tinge of dread,  
 Perfection unconditioned, strange indeed,  
 As if at once the green leaf, flower, and seed.  
 Let the sun shine thus on thy nut-brown head,  
 So lovely flecked with little shadows, shed  
 Through the close trellis as I see it now,  
 And on thy neck and on thy thoughtful brow :  
 Look up, so thought by thought be answerèd.

And let the dead leaves fall whene'er they may,  
 Dropping like Danae's gold-shower from on high,  
 Rare jewels gathered in thy lap they'll lie :  
 This day hath been a sacred festa-day,  
 We'll lock it fast within our treasure-store,  
 And live in its enchantment ever more.



THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE, PART II.

IX

*AUTUMN SUNSHINE.*

Now week by week the scattering leaves  
Drift down the sheltered lane,  
And week by week the sharp wind grieves  
The tree-tops with the rain.

But clouds to-day have cleared away,  
The sun shines warm and strong  
On cot and farm, on hedge and way,—  
'Tis a holiday worth a song.

The air is bland on face and hand,  
Returned the mid-year hath ;  
The saddened flowers their hearts expand,  
Simmers the garden-path.

The spotted emperor, seldom seen,  
Is the sunflower's bosom friend ;  
The dragon-flies flicker across the sheen,  
Where the yellow flag-leaves bend.

But the shooter is heard upon the hill,  
The robin is by the door,  
The curlew cries o'erhead so shrill,  
The swallows are seen no more.

And this is the last last crimson day  
The exhausted sun can send ;  
The evening falls, our foot-path way  
Turns homeward towards the end.

## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

x

*THE ROBIN'S OCTOBER SONG.*

THAT carol to the cold and misty morn,  
 That ending autumn-song, that short-lived song,  
 O robin ! I know well, so sharp and strong,  
 As do those trembling groves already shorn  
 And yellowing. O brief sweet song ! so lorn  
 Of gladness ; all these leaves, from twig to stem,  
 Tremble as if dead fingers counted them :  
 To sing such song men too were surely born.

And this it is : the most desired of Gods  
 Is waxen weak, and all his children too,  
 Even the sun ; that wide-winged spectre flew  
 Faster, and now hath caught him by the hair.  
 Let us contend no more against the rods,  
 But sing our last song, and descend the stair.

## THE OLD SCOTCH HOUSE.

## XI

*WINTER COMING.*

THE strong wind blows from o'er the sea,  
Foam-freckled far and near ;  
Within the casement closed we say,  
Winter at last is here.

The long boughs of the old trees creak,  
And strike against the rain ;  
The dead leaves and the little birds  
Are thrown on the window pane.

From room to room the careful dame  
Each bolt and latch doth try ;  
The storm-sprite on the winding stair  
Sings to her mournfully.

The sound of fast-running waters fills  
The air both night and day,  
And mists like ghosts from all the glens  
Rise and are driven away.



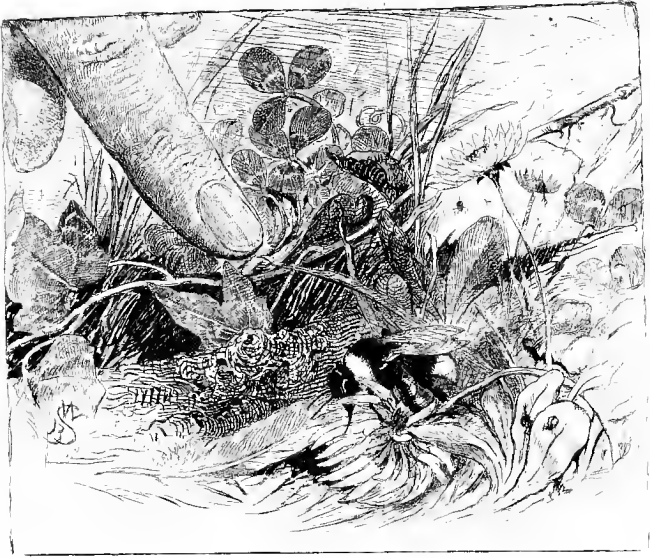
Sad is the rushing of railing rain,  
And swollen streams wailing low ;  
And the fitful wind, like a slave pursued  
By the fast gathering snow.

From the flower-beds the rank heaps fall  
Across the bordered walk ;  
The sunflower props like beggars slant  
In rags of leaves and stalk.

The farmer drives his horses home,  
The cows are in the byre ;  
The frost is come, and the ploughman sits  
Idle beside the fire.

Away to the South like the swallows  
We turn our eyes again,  
To be lost once more in the labyrinths  
And multitudes of men.

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STUDIES FROM NATURE.



*SUNDAY MORNING ALONE.*

MORNING and noon and evening, week by week  
 And month by month and year by year, return,  
 The never-ending harmonies of this world,  
 Without an end or pause. The mill-stream flows  
 Continuous ; the industrious wheel turns round ;  
 The heavy stones grind on, yet all that flows  
 Into the watchful hopper-sack 's no more  
 Than needful for each day's void kneading-trough.  
 The garments cast last night next morn we don,  
 And still, for gains to spend, our lives burn down,  
 Until the vintage-time of life's year comes ;  
 For still some guest, unanswered and unbid,  
 In our soul's prison waits with lidless eyes  
 Turned we know not wherefore towards the Future.

Here sit I now this bright noonday with hands  
 And thoughts all free and unclaimed, like some fool  
 On whom hath fallen good fortune ; and behold !  
 The Conscience questions and almost disowns  
 Right to this freedom and this idleness.  
 Why is the wheel still now ? it asks,—the stream,

Why sleeps it locked and limpid in the sun?  
For custom's yoke so marks the neck it clothes,  
Its absence becomes irksome, and the Law,  
Blessed or accursed we say not, seems for man  
A thunder-call to Action ;—seems indeed,  
As much else seems, but is not. Let us rest,  
Now and then rest, and make Time wait on us—  
Holly rest, the flowers o' the field and we,  
Being again twin-brothers as of old  
'Neath Eden's cedar shades.

This sabbath morn

The wan sun coldly shines, yet fields and roads,  
The young math springing through the hard black soil,  
The market-cart half shedded, and the stack  
Of hay now cut short like the poor man's bread,  
Cheerily glisten. In this small dull room  
Steadily beats the red fire, while the dog  
Winks listlessly before it ; winks and dreams,  
And suddenly looks round him like churched boys  
Ashamed to nod. Upon this window-sill  
The sparrows light for crumbs laid duly there ;  
Upon the topmost withy of that hedge,  
Leafless and sharp as wire-work, whistling clear,  
A half-hour since a blackbird perched : I turned,  
Startled by song, too sudden turned ! Within  
The village church the household every one  
Have shut themselves, and I alone remain  
Idle and free.

The house clock throbs, still throbs,  
Heard or unheard it throbs. 'Tween soul and sense,  
Peace like Death's angel comes : fresh powers awake,  
Freed from the straining tendons of the world.  
As one whose master sleeps, may dare to think  
Of liberty and thereof sing, this new  
Interior life Itself sees without wonder,  
And hears its own thoughts whispering thus, ' Behold !  
Eternity's sonorous shores, and I  
Am here.' The present is withdrawn, the Real  
Is round us inexpressibly : it seems  
That the breath ceases and the heart stands still,  
Or as in trance we were removed from them,  
And thereupon the Soul's white eyes uncloze  
Upon the sunless ether.

Such a glimpse  
Of immaterial things men oft-times feel  
In silence, mental stillness, nerve-repose,  
And conscience undisturbed. It flows and ebbs,  
Ebbs utterly away. Could we but press  
Right through these crypts unlit of Consciousness,  
Seek out the sanctum whose ineffable flame  
Cannot by mortal eyes be borne, and rend  
The sensuous veils that shelter us from God !  
Could we but press  
The adventure through soul instincts such as these,  
Both eye and ear, it might be, would wake up

To an unspeakable energy, and heaven  
Open as to the dying !

But yet why,

Thus hastening sunwards, drop the priceless threads  
Our dear earth-born Arachne weaves for us ?  
One great tent-curtain all enfolds ; this world  
All other worlds, this life all other lives,  
Like echoes answer each to each. The stars  
Are seen but in the dark, Force hides herself  
In the inert on all sides ; nor can we  
Breathe but while death conspires ; and only here,  
Here where black earth bears heartsease, human eyes  
Converse, and passions cling with burning lips,  
Dying together ; here where autumn suns  
Bronze the bread-yielding sheaves and leaves of trees  
Drop to the evening breezes, while the brows  
Of the strong reapers melt, or their hands chill,  
Bearing the moonlit scythe or sickle home.

All things are types and symbols : earth and heaven  
Each other interpenetrate : all creeds  
And churches crowning the hill-tops of time,—  
Pillars of fire by night, of cloud by day,  
Are but attempts to touch the symbolized.

But now the village tongue hath been let loose,  
The village church resigns its worshippers :  
Staid ancient couples maunder past ; they skirt



The well-known fields by pathways ; now and then  
Men call and latches clink, and childhood's din  
Rings here and there. The winking dog starts up,  
And by the door stands with fixed eyes and ears ;  
Approaching steps are heard ; the tingling rain  
Of female voices o'er the threshold falls !  
--Ah, there you sit ; just as, three hours ago,  
We left you. The old vicar preached, good soul !  
Corinthians, fifteenth, fifty-first, that grand  
Wonderful verse—' Behold, a mystery !  
We shall not all sleep, we shall all be changed.'  
A sparrow had got in ; from roof to roof  
It flew—oh, fifty times. The quire to-day  
Really did well, it did one good to hear,  
And like the text the singers sang, ' Behold,  
We shall not all sleep, we shall all be changed.'

*GREEN CHERRIES.*

THE season had been late : Spring, lagging long,—  
 Not like the rosy-cheeked lithe Columbine  
 We see her pictured, but with frost-filled hair,  
 And sad scared eyes, had cowered beneath the eaves  
 From the sharp-biting blasts and drifting rains.  
 Yet in the heart of nature the great change  
 Had been effected, and one morn in June  
 Suddenly all the clouds were carol filled,  
 Every road dried and freckled with sunshine,  
 Every flower full-blown, both by hedge and garth,  
 Every tree heavy. So I said, This day  
 Is the true May-day, and I straight went forth  
 The nighest way unto the loneliest fields.  
 Two hours or so it might be from the town,  
 Before a thriving friend's well-built gateway,  
 I found myself, and entered, though I knew  
 That he would not be there ; unfortunate  
 Son of dame Fortune he, who sits all day  
 With wits repressed and sharp pen, gain and loss  
 His nether lip developing.

I swung

The gate and entered. All along the edge  
Of the bright gravel fallen lilac blooms  
Or young leaf-sheaths were scattered, and small groups  
Of coming toadstools showed where showers had lain.  
Under the wavering shades of trees I turned,  
Skirting the garden's boxwood bordered ways,  
Its rhododendrons bursting into flower,  
Flaming beneath the sunshine, and at length  
Rested upon an orchard arbour seat.

All over bench and table, ground and sward,  
The young green cherries lay, yet overhead,  
Glittering like beads, they still seemed thick as leaves  
Upon the boughs. And young green apples too,  
Scattered by prodigal winds, peeped here and there,  
Among the clover. Through the black boughs shone  
Clouds of a white heat, in the cold blue depths  
Poised steadily, and all about them rang  
Those songs of skylarks. Other sounds were there :  
The click mistimed of hedge-shears ; the brave bee  
Passing with trumpet gladness ; and the leaves  
Waving against each other. Soon this way  
Along the further hedge-tops came the shears ;  
Two wielding arms assiduous and a face  
The prickly screen disclosed. Far down the line  
By slow degrees went shears and arms, while I

Marked the still toppling twigs, until at length  
 They passed beyond the fruit-trees, and I turned  
 To other themes. Above the flowering beds  
 Of jonquil and chill iris rose the house,—  
 There is the window of my host's small room,  
 There Harriet's, vacant now, with casements thrown  
 Wide open, their white curtains driven about ;—  
 And see, within that other tightly closed,  
 The old dame sits intent on stocking wires.  
 I sat there ; on the seat beside me lay  
 A cluster of three cherries on one stalk.

A casual passing picture ! strange it bides  
 Perennial with me yet ! This little sprig  
 Of three green cherries, what may it concern  
 The universal heart ? Why all along  
 The road of life do I remember still  
 The three green cherries there ?

And yet the eye  
 Sees only what the mind perceives. The heart  
 Hath its supreme perceptions. We retain  
 Deepest impressions from most trivial things ;  
 They are the daily food by which we grow ;  
 Some future poet shall find fit airs for them  
 And touch the nerve of life. For yet shall come  
 The Poet, such an one as hath not yet  
 Entered his sickle in those great corn-fields

Whence comes the spiritual bread. Not battle deaths,  
Nor mere adventures, nor rank passions moved  
By vulgar things shall he sing ; nor shall prate  
With vague loose phrase of Nature : he shall see  
The inexorable step-dame as she is,—  
A teacher blind, whose task-work and closed door,  
Body and soul, we strive against ! O world !  
The Poet of the future, welcome him !  
When he appears.

I left my reverie

Within the arbour, threw the green fruit back,  
Crossed the scythed lawn and threshold, for the door  
Stood hospitably open ; none I met,  
Nor had I any errand maid or man  
Could answer : on the well-known table stood  
Bread cut in shives and wine. Then I put off  
My hat before this sacrament and ate,  
And called aloud that I might even perforce  
Be courteous and give thanks ; but no one came.  
So thence departing, said I, ' Every home  
Is thus enchanted justly understood,'  
And fared right on for many miles that day,  
Picking up thoughts like wild-flowers by the path ;  
Some of them coarse and prickly, some sweet-breathed,  
But none of them were homeward borne save those,  
Now half expressed, I have writ here for thee !

*YOUTH AND AGE.*

OUR night repast was ended : quietness  
 Returned again : the boys were in their books ;  
 The old man slept, and by him slept his dog :  
 My thoughts were in the dream-land of to-morrow :  
 A knock is heard, anon the maid brings in  
 A black-sealed letter that some over-worked  
 Late messenger leaves. Each one looks round and  
     scans,  
 But lifts it not, and I at last am told  
 To read it. ‘ Died here at his house this day’—  
 Some well-known name not needful here to print,  
 Follows at length. Soon all return again  
 To their first stillness, but the old man coughs,  
 And cries, ‘ Ah, he was always like the grave,  
 And still he was but young !’ while those who stand  
 On life’s green threshold smile within themselves,  
 Thinking how very old he was to them,  
 And what long years, what memorable deeds,  
 Are theirs in prospect ! Little care have they  
 What old man dies, what child is born, indeed ;  
 Their day is coming, and their sun shall shine !

*AN ARTIST'S BIRTHPLACE.*

(A CUMBERLAND SKETCH : THE ARTIST WAS BLACKLOCK THE  
LANDSCAPE-PAINTER, WHO DIED SHORTLY AFTER.)

THIS is the *stateman's* country : every man  
Hath his own steading, his own field, his garth,  
And share of common and of moss, wherefrom  
He cuts his winter's fuel, building up  
The russet stack above his gable thatch.  
Look through that straggling unpruned hedge, you'll  
see

One of those sinewy Saxons, such an one,  
From sire to son, perhaps, hath till'd that mould,  
For these five hundred years ; that rough-hewn block  
Of timber plays the part of harrow here.

And now we reach the turn I told you of,  
Close to our journey's end. The violets  
Are just as thick as ever, and beneath  
The rooty sand-bank those white embers show  
A gipsy's bivouac has but late been here.  
And there is this old village, with its wide  
Irregular path, its rattling streamlet bridged

Before each cottage with loose planks or stones,  
And all the geese and ducks that have no fear  
Of strangers, the wide smith's shop, and the church  
Whose grey stone roof is within reach of hand.  
A fit place for an artist to be reared ;  
Not a great Master whose vast unshared toils,  
Add to the riches of the world, rebuild  
God's house, and clothe with Prophets walls and roof,  
Defending cities as a pastime—such  
We have not ! but the homelier heartier hand  
That gives us English landscapes year by year.

There is his small ancestral home, so gay,  
With rosery and green wicket. We last met  
In London : I've heard since he had returned  
Homeward less sound in health than when he reached  
That athlete's theatre, well termed the grave  
Of little reputations. Fresh again  
Let's hope to find him.

Thus conversing stept  
Two travellers downward. The descending road  
Rough with loose pebbles left by floods of late :  
Straight through the wicket passed they, and in front  
The pent-roofed door stood knocking : all was still :  
Through the low parlour window books were seen  
Upon the little settle, and some pots  
With flowers, a birdcage hung too without song  
Close to the window ; round them noontide glowed  
So gladsomely, the leaves were every one



Glistening and quivering, and the hosts of gnats  
Spun in the shadows ; but within seemed dark  
And dead. A quick light foot is heard, and there,  
Before them stood a maiden in the sun  
That fell upon her chestnut hair like fire.

How winsome fair she was 'tis hard to tell !  
For she was strong and straight, like a young elm,  
And without fear, although she halted there  
Answering with coy eyes scarce turned to us,  
Yet not embarrassed, while she told the tale  
Of the sick man. Then felt the strangers free  
To look upon her : her tall neck was tinged  
With brown and bore her small head easily  
Like that of a giraffe ; her saffron jupe,  
Girt loosely round her long waist, fell in folds  
From her high bosom,—but, as hath been said,  
How winsome fair she was 'twas hard to tell—  
Untaught and strong, and conscious of no charm ;  
I might describe her from the head succinct,  
Even to the high-arched instep of her foot,  
And all in vain : the soul sincere, the full  
Yet homely harmony she bore with her,  
Movèd me like the first sight of the sea,  
And made me think of old queens, Guenevere,  
Or maid Rowena with her ' waes-hail,' or  
Aslauga whom the Sea-king chanced upon,

Keeping her sheep beside Norse waves, the while  
She combed her hair out mirror'd in the stream.

The artist was not there to welcome them,  
That much was plain ; and, more, the life of home  
Was not for him ; Elspeth, the crazed beldame  
O' the village, shouted and sang by sometimes,  
And that he could not bear. This and much else,  
At the hedge ale-house, while the friends regaled  
By the wide chimney where the brown turf burned,  
And daylight glinted down, they heard. But still  
As of the damsel thought they most, one cried—  
' I could have ta'en her head between my hands  
And kissed her,—she's so wise and frank and kind,  
I'm sure she never would have thought it strange.'

*MORNING SLEEP.*

ANOTHER day hath dawned  
 Since, hastily and tired, I threw myself  
 Into the dark lap of advancing sleep.  
 Meanwhile, through the oblivion of the night  
 The ponderous world its old course hath fulfilled ;  
 And now the gradual sun begins to throw  
 Its slanting glory on the heads of trees,  
 And every bird stirs in its nest revealed,  
 And shakes its dewy wings.

A blessed gift

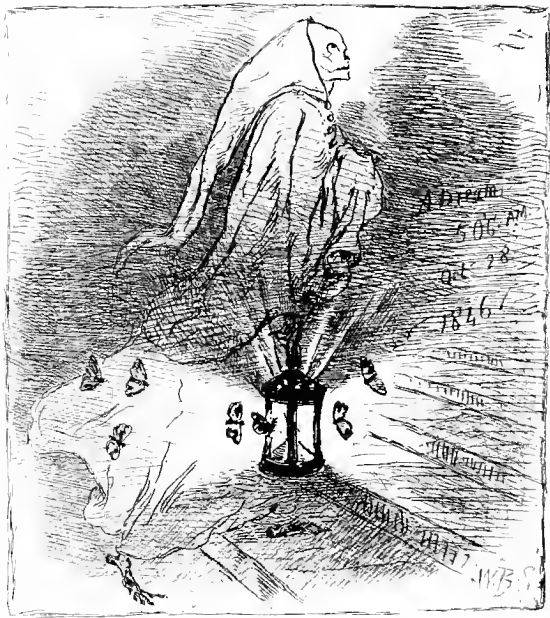
Unto the weary hath been mine to-night—  
 Slumber unbroken : now it floats away ;  
 But whether 'twere not best to woo it still,  
 The head thus comfortably posed, the eyes  
 In a continual dawning, mingling lights  
 And darks with vagrant fantasies, one hour,  
 Yet for another hour? I will not break  
 The shining woof ; I will not rudely leap  
 Out of this golden atmosphere, through which  
 I see the forms of immortalities.  
 Verily, soon enough the labouring day,

With its necessitous unmusical calls,  
Will force the indolent conscience into life.

The tiresome moth upon the window-panes  
Hath ceased to flap, or traverse with blind whirr  
The room's dusk corners ; and the leaves without  
Vibrate upon their thin stems with the breeze  
Toward the light blowing. To an Eastern vale  
That light may now be waning, and across  
The tall reeds by the Ganges lotus-paved,  
Lengthening the shadows of the banyan-tree.  
The rice-fields are all silent in the glow,  
All silent the deep heaven without a cloud,  
Burning like molten gold. A red canoe  
Crosses with fan-like paddles and the sound  
Of feminine song, freighted with great-eyed maids  
Whose zoneless bosoms swell on the rich air ;  
A lamp is in each hand, each lamp a boat  
To take the chance, or sink or swim, such rite  
Of love-portent they try, and such may see  
Ibis or emu from their cocoa nooks,  
What time the granite sentinels that watch  
The mouths of cavern-temples hail the first  
Faint star, and feel the gradual darkness blend  
Their august lineaments ; what time Haroun  
Perambulated Bagdat, and none knew  
He was the Caliph who knocked soberly  
By Giafar's hand at their gates, shut betimes ;

What time Prince Assad sat on the high hill  
'Neath the pomegranate-tree, long wearying  
For his lost brother's step ;—what time, as now,  
Along our English sky, flame-furrows cleave  
And break the quiet of the cold blue clouds,  
And the first rays look in upon our roofs.  
Let the day come or go ; there is no let  
Or hindrance to the indolent wilfulness  
Of fantasy and dream-land. Place and time  
And bodily weight are for the wakeful only,  
Now they exist not : life is like that cloud,  
Floating, poised happily in mid-air, bathed  
In a sustaining halo, soft and warm,  
Voyaging on, though to no bourne ; all heaven  
Its own wide home alike ; earth far below  
Fading still further, further ; towers and towns  
Smoking with life, its roads with traffic thronged,  
And tedious travellers within iron cars ;  
Its rivers, and its fields with labouring hinds,  
To whose raised eyes, as, stretched upon the sward,  
They may enjoy some intervals of rest,  
That little cloud appears scarce worth a thought.  
There is an old and memorable tale  
Of some sound sleeper being borne away  
By banded faeries in the mottled hour,  
Before the cock-crow, through unknown weird woods  
And nameless forests, where the boughs and roots  
Opened before him, closed behind ; thenceforth

A wise man lived he all unchanged by years.  
Perchance again these fairies may return,  
And evermore shall I remain as now—  
A dreamer half awake, a wandering cloud!—  
Wandering no more, there are no faeries now;  
I hear domestic voices on the stair!



*MONODY.*

ETERNITY is silent and serene,  
As the illimitable depth of heaven  
That presses round the earth on winter nights.  
Man comes and goes like the successive clouds

Over the moon, that come from the obscure,  
And are found only in the white queen's path,—  
One instant seen, then gone for evermore.

He died—but while he lived, some laurelled muse  
Was ever his close friend : to me he came  
As a disciple, what I could I gave,  
But he was richer : honey of the heart  
Was ever in his gift, and curious spells  
Of richest fantasy were his, and life  
Was all before him luminous in its hopes.

How have they vanished ! but few weeks are gone  
Since here, at this same hour, his pleasant eyes  
Were raised to mine, the while he rhymed again  
The verses made that morn : alas ! the web  
Of gossamer hath drifted with the dew  
And disappeared before the fervid noon.

With sad resolve I looked upon his face  
When the white sheet was round him. At his head  
His mother placed a light. My tears might well  
Excuse hers—heart-sick mother ! How those lips  
Were shrunk, the nostrils closed, the candid eyes  
Shut up within their caves ! I knew him not.  
It was no more the wild inspired young soul ;—  
Draw the sheet gently over him again—  
Alas ! he is more dreadful than before.

He is gone truly : some few rhythmic staves,  
A broken pen, is all remains of him.



Strange thought comes o'er us when we trace the lines  
Writ by a hand that now is dust : we scarce  
Believe but that some monstrous trick were played,  
And it was not so,—only seemed to be !

Had he but lived,—oh, had a kind star smiled  
Upon his couch and made him well ! But, no ;  
'Tis childish to cry thus : the grasshopper  
Chirps in the turf, the dew is on the blades,  
The worm beneath, the butterfly above,  
And the great sun shines brightly all the same,—  
We are so little in the sum of things !

Yes, it is better ! penury's pinching hand  
Had claimèd, even as it was, his transient span.  
'Tis well, for he was born to fight strong foes :  
'Tis well, the smoking flax is gone to dust,  
The sacrifice is made, the pains are past,—  
The white sheet covers him for evermore.

*THE DUKE'S FUNERAL.*

November 18, 1852.

So, so, now let the great dead quietly  
 Go to his mighty tomb,—go join the dust  
 Of better and worse men : give not the dead  
 What the dead valued not : those cannon-tongues  
 Speak out more fitly, poets, than do thine.  
 Leave ye this statesman-soldier unto Time,  
 Who passes on the night-winds of God's law,  
 Leaving the heroes stript for history's page,  
 Cleansing the grave. Your polished lays, 'twould  
 seem,

Refreshen no man's throat, and he who lies  
 Upon that cumbrous wain of bronze, unblessed  
 By Christian symbol or cartouche of death,  
 Would but have asked you what you meant, have given  
 Short audience, and hoped you then would go !  
 There is false inspiration in the theme,  
 It puts the lamp out : for myself, I fain  
 Would have constrained a sonnet ; but not one  
 Of all the fourteen twigs would bear green leaves,  
 Much less fair flowers, ripe fruit. Still was he one

Of England's truest sons, and what he ought  
That did he worthily, and with strong will.  
By trade a warrior he ; and, like a lord  
Of cotton and consols, by wariest games,  
Venturing boldly when the market turns,  
Never despairing through stark bankruptcy,  
Increases on all sides until his name  
Is in kings' mouths, and by his bonds are held  
The necks of nations, so succeeded he.  
Genius beside him seemed a madman ; Truth  
Was but contingent, relative to him ;  
And heroism but a boyish phrase.  
This thing he had to do, and this did he,  
Depending both on sword and protocol,  
On blood and red-tape. Earth to him was but  
Leagues for a march, towns cannon'd walls, and men  
So many items to be match'd by others,  
Harder, steadier ; both to serve, to die,  
For those ordained to rule. To him the priest  
And constable were equals ; and our isle—  
For he was patriotic—furnished him  
Motive at once and commissariat, ruled  
His thought and action. Duty was his god,  
The Statesman's duty, duty to confirm  
The anointed cincture round the brow of kings,  
The people in their level, and the plough  
Straight in the furrow. Wherefore then should flowers  
Be strewn upon his bier, or chant be sung

By poet, requiem or organ-prayer  
Be uttered? Let the drums beat and the boom  
Of sulphurous cannon o'er the house tops roll :  
Let him be lapt in costliest panoply,  
Painted all over with new heraldries.  
Give him for mourners all those youths who lived  
Rejoicing in the smiles of Regent George ;  
All honourable men, without faith, hope,  
Or charity, who generously strewed  
The ring and cockpit with unpaid champagne ;  
All handsome cavaliers, with well-hid sores ;—  
Give him for mourners all the timorous souls  
Who see no providence in coming years ;  
And give him all the enemies of France ;  
And those who reverence power ; and, more than all,  
Erect and foremost in this world-array,  
Men of firm hearts and regulated powers,  
Who call not unto Hercules, but set  
Their sinewy shoulders to the staggering wheels,  
And say, ' Thus as we will it shall it be.'

The day was won ! proud, jubilant, redeemed,  
Their thrones again set firm, as one may hope,  
All coached or centaur-wise like men of war,  
The princes reappeared : and France, perforce,  
Worn out with dear-bought glory, welcomed them,  
Lighting her topmost windows. Sluggish Seine  
Hissed with the falling stars, night burst a-flame

With sputtering splendour over bridge and quay ;  
And in the new-gilt Tuileries once again,  
Propped on her swollen feet, stood Right Divine.  
The sharp thin nostril of the high-born swelled,  
The diplomat rewoke all clothed in smiles,  
Tuffless attachés like stunned oxen stared  
At Hapsburgh, Bourbon, Guelph, and Romanoff ;  
Europe was saved ! Once more, as in old times,  
The privileged worthies of the world could follow  
Each his vocation,—Metternich trepan  
Unwary guests as customers for wine ;  
Talleyrand titillate his black brain with talk  
Of omelets,—good innocent old man.

But these are gone like last year's pantomime,  
And Europe is again saved,—France again ;  
A new Napoleon, its last saviour, sweeps  
These old things out like cobwebs, sabreing both  
Legitimist and red-republican.  
So wags the world, so history fills her stage,  
And he who with this mighty pomp beneath  
A nation's eyes goes tombward, leaves no mark !

*MIDNIGHT.*

1832 (revised).

THE lamp within winks yellow and old,  
 The moon without stares blank and cold,  
 Chequering all the boarded floor  
 With frosted squares so chill and hoar,  
 And dark lines from the casement sent,—  
 The lamp-light, over the table spent,  
 Makes every corner of the room  
 Hide itself in hollow gloom ;  
 Here and there shapes looming out,  
 Bench or armour, clothes or mask,  
 Mannikin in feathered casque,  
 Like dwarfs and goblins all about,—  
 Heads and elbows, eyes and wings,  
 Mere misshapen hints of things.  
 Close we now our book and lay  
 Reluctant still the pen away,  
 Lifting it sometimes again  
 If any laggard thought constrain ;  
 Laggard or roving, home too late,  
 Knocking at the bolted gate.

Turn the chair and fold the fingers,  
Coax the little fire that lingers,  
Coax it to a tingling glow,  
While the snell wind's northern game  
Is played out with the window frame,  
And through the key-hole sad and low.  
Let's have a cheerier parting word,  
Set the flask upon the board,  
Get the old kanaster out,  
And make the blue whiffs curl about.  
Let's try, the day's work ended now,  
To see Atlantes from the prow  
Of fancy's fearless barque shot far  
Beyond the breaker's splash and roar,  
Drifting without toil of oar,  
Sail or ballast, helm or star.  
Watching, lonely, half asleep,  
All round us becomes faint and rare,  
Like lighted ships in a misty air.  
Is that the bleating of far-off sheep?  
—Is that a child at the window-pane,  
Or merely sighing gusts of rain?  
By nature still we fear the dark,  
One's own shadow is strange and stark,  
And seems to move, though we keep still—  
And though we laugh each morning duly,  
We know so very little truly,  
That we fear against our will !

I remember long ago  
Waking at midnight, when the snow  
Was on the ground, and hearing far  
Away the sound of a guitar, '   
And creeping darkly out of bed,  
I saw pass in the street below,  
Singing a sad song lovely and low,  
A lady in red with yard-long hair,  
A crown of leaves only on her head,  
Splendidly clothed, but her feet were bare.  
So passed she singing ; I heard her far  
Into the night with her small guitar ;  
And when I crept again to bed  
It seemed as if some one had said,—  
' That is your Life from street to street,  
Passing unheard with shoeless feet,  
Over the well-trod snow.'  
They tell me, with a smile or stare,  
That twenty years can have no care,  
Nor can it have a 'long ago.'  
But well I know the past alone  
Is safely done with, sealed and gone,  
And at threescore most certainly  
We shall be lighter and more free !

Alack a day ! I'm wandering still  
By the wells o' Weary, the woods of Will,



Hand in hand with cheerless themes  
Worse than dreams.  
So then to bed. The wind sings loud,  
The sharp moon presses against the cloud,  
And cuts its through : anon she seems  
Set in a ruff, and her great white face  
Looks silly and sad from the void blue space ;  
Vanward again the cloud-ridge streams,  
And we find her out on'y at intervals,  
As a drowning man looks up and calls,  
While here and there a star outpeeps,  
Cheerily a moment seen,  
Anon the wrack drives in between,  
And like Time's beard all oversweeps.  
To my dying lamp I turn,  
Turn I to my chamber door :  
The embers now no longer burn,  
The casement-chequers have left the floor,  
Only my shadow so black and tall,  
Steps with me from wall to wall !

*THE SEA-SHORE.*

## TWO PICTURES.

## I. MIST.

MUFFLED and rime-laden, sombre and sad,  
 In a limbo 'tween night and day,  
 As if on an island we stand whose bounds  
 Are shadowed and charmed away.

We wander as in some other old world,  
 Foot-printing the smooth brown sands,  
 The snaky weeds shrieking beneath the heel  
 That slides from their cellular bands.

Flakes of foam are blown from the ebb,  
 White runners along the beach,  
 Where yesterday's margin of crab's green claws  
 And stubble and starfish bleach.

A filmy ship looms now and then  
 From the point where the keen winds blow,  
 Ghostlike it hangs in the air, then fades  
 Where the unknown keen winds go.

Wave after wave for ten thousand years  
Has furrowed the brown sand here,  
Wave after wave under clouds and stars  
Has cried in the dead shore's ear.

When Jesus was lifted on Calvary,  
And saints long buried arose,  
Through the black three hours the waves broke here,  
Continuous as do those !

Overhead shoots a querulous cry,—  
A sea-mew with long white breast  
Down on the water sweeps out and away,  
Pursuing its hungry quest.

Old man, what find ye among the black pools?  
Among the sea-hair what gain?  
The fisherman lifts up his basket of bait,  
The wind and waves only remain.

## II. SUNSHINE.

Through the wide-opened window shines this morn  
The sun with a steady breeze,  
The cottage smoke slants and hurries about,  
Golden against the blue seas.

*THE SEA SHORE.*

Imperiously the breakers shout,  
Imperiously they call,  
With dazzling crests and curved prows,  
Over each other they fall.

The yellow flat glitters beneath the shine  
Like a flooring of priceless ware,  
Dimpled and dotted by showers and ridged  
Like a never-ascending stair.

Our shadows outstepping before us go,  
Drawn out by the level disc,  
Each wet pebble, opal or ruby or green,  
Casts a shade like an obelisk.

Merrily dancing and leaping away,  
Hither, and everywhere ;  
The white young shrimps are merry as bees  
In a clover-field's warm air.

Dogs bark and children's voices ring ;  
From the shelving rocks they see,  
The sunlit sail of the fisherman's boat  
Bearing home from the generous sea.

From the high house-door peers the dame,  
With her broad hand shading her eyes,  
Grimly she smiles as she shoulders her creel,  
And down the rough pathway hies !

*REQUIEM.*

(Four o'clock morning, 3rd of the month. David Scott died  
5th March, 1849.)

THE winds are wandering through the long night,  
Hushing and moaning round chimney and roof ;  
The ashes fall white from the dull fire-light,  
The great shadows dance on the walls aloof,  
While the soul of my brother recedes.

Fitfully crumble the embers away ;  
Abroad over all flies the roaring wind ;  
And the rain-clouds, through the obscurity,  
Hurry along the moon, silently kind,  
Like an opened window in heaven.

The pitiless Norns are visible now  
Between the dim gateways of gold and horn ;  
For the nimbus of death is over his brow,  
And his cunning right hand lies feeble and worn,  
Never again to be strong.

Go back, go back ! would the spirit fain say,  
To the in-pressing darkness and walls of stone ;  
For the eye of hope is as wide as day  
Through the impending infinity ;  
His short day's work is but half done,  
And still young the manifold heart.

Come back, come back ! doth the world demand ;  
Come to the harvest, thou sower of seed !  
And the kindred labourers on the strand  
Of this dear human region plead,  
'Go not ! of thee we have wondrous need,'  
And hail him with lifted arms.

The black angel hears not ; the ages dead  
And the ages to come are one family,  
Under the All-Father's mantle hid ;  
Gains, even of art and of poetry,  
Are but chaff from the garner of time.

The blast is wandering through the long night ;  
Within the dark curtains the straight limbs lie ;  
Faintly flickers the last fire-light ;  
But hark, the cock crows ! for morning is nigh,  
Silently lifting the cold wet sky,  
While the soul of my brother recedes.

*BEDE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.*

BEING A MONOLOGUE OF THAT INDUSTRIOUS SCHOLAR,  
 RESUSCITATED AT THE CALL OF CARDINAL WISEMAN,  
 IN HIS DISCOURSE ON THE OPENING OF HARTLEPOOL  
 R. C. CHURCH, AUGUST 1851.

## I

AH, holy Christ! who calls me now,  
 Straining the skin back over this brow—  
 Drawing and cording together the bones  
 With strings of nerve among sand and stones?  
 He hears Ah, holy Christ! the cups of joints  
 Some piercing ichor now anoints ;  
 the loud And, conjured from far parts, I feel,  
 voice of Working hither like screws of steel,  
 the Fragments of hands and toes. Again  
 Cardinal, The body of death, with its care and pain,  
 Receives me, and I strive to rise,  
 To open ears and open eyes.  
 I'm no more passive in God's hand,  
 Lying straight in heaven-land.

Ah, holy Christ ! if it be thy law  
 That I the blind life-senses draw  
 Again upon me,—the lusts of the flesh,  
 The lusts of the eye, and the weary mesh  
 Of cogitating, learning, preaching,—  
 and thinks      Shed more unction on my teaching,  
 himself        Make me diligent ; not slow,  
 as he was     Like Alfin, who could hear no crow  
 when he        Of morning cock, but started up  
 died.            At the first clang of the cook's tin cup.  
                   Oh, this wretched body of death !  
                   I clutch about me scant of breath ;—  
                   That foot still swollen too ;—there's no lamp  
                   To find the balsam :—foul and damp  
                   Is all about me ; certainly  
                   Shrivelled will all the parchment be.  
                   But from that last dear task I'm free :  
                   Finished the Gospel was, clear writ  
                   In linguam vulgi ere the fit  
                   Came over me, and on the floor  
                   I swooned away—unlatch the door,  
                   Or I shall die outright ! Oh, God—  
                   I stand sun-smitten on the sod !  
                   Kyrie eleison !



## II

Where then is Jarrow, where the brave  
 Stone church with its belfry o'er the nave?  
 Or the cloister all of smooth wrought stone  
 He looks Outside? Some weird hath overthrown  
 in vain The land; I'm not myself,—that stream  
 for old Is not the Tyne! the wild Dane's gleam  
 Of sword and fire must have shone here  
 If this be Jarrow, this the dear  
 Jarrow Candida casa, with broad roof-fall,  
 Church. And two glass windows painted small  
 And beautiful. Alas, for all  
 The brethren! for old Ulph who fought  
 Hard with the psalter, yet could not  
 Learn to read; and Wulf who made  
 My bed, good man! and for long years laid  
 My needfuls ready for me, so  
 That I might all my cares bestow  
 On making books. Alas and woe,  
 For all the books! the penitential  
 Reading book, missal so essential,  
 Singing book, numeral; all gone—  
 Bare as a pagan I stand alone!  
 This very day may be Easter tide  
 And I not know it: let me hide

He thinks I' the grave again, for I have lost  
 Count of days, yule, pentecost,—  
 he is not And fear I am no Christian ghost,  
 himself till Not Bede, not Bede.  
 But now I wake : behold the sky  
 he sees Blue as it ever was ; blue, and as high :  
 the sky And great clouds lying all along the land  
 and the Coming and going still. Everywhere  
 sea, Are life-sounds filling the milk-warm air ;  
 The spider's warps are hung out on each bough,  
 Clear dew-pools light the hollows of large blades ;  
 Surely the year is ripe to Autumn now,—  
 An autumn seared o'er with the self-same shades  
 Once knew I in the body ; and the sod  
 Feels to the foot the same, each clod  
 Troubling these poor toes torn by flints  
 And thorns, that oft-times left their prints  
 Sea-filled on sands or in the marsh frozen black,  
 Between Wearmouth and Jarrow, hastening back  
 From Benedict to Ceolfred through the slack.

## III

A thousand years, oh Father, in Thy sight  
 Are as one day, one day without a night :  
 The outward stream of things for ever flows ;  
 Whatever lived or grew still lives and grows ;

The sensuous world still shines as erst it shone,  
 And I am here to sing the antiphone.  
 But what is man before Thee and his ways ;  
 Yea, even the sanctuary and the shrine  
 By which he clings and where-before he prays,  
 Thereby to find some pass to the divine !  
 For here I fall back through a yeast of years,  
 The expected day of Doom through all my tears  
 I've seen not : Father Peter in the porch  
 Of God's house nor the penitential scorch  
 Have blessed me ; but I shiver as of old,  
 Weak and half blind and cold.

The great salt sea doth answer me alone,  
 Like Tophet against heaven, its undertone  
 Maintaining evermore against the song  
 Of earth : the white foam blows along  
 and the These unchanged sands. Ah, now I see  
 promontory The Tyne-mouth rock, and memory turns to me  
 of Tyne- Now shall I find out Jarrow, and again  
 month. Take up the inkhorn and that history  
 Begun long since : how shall I gain  
 Tidings of all the change gone by  
 While I have slept?—but patience wears  
 The hardest stone through, toils and cares  
 For learning's sake are treasury stairs.  
 On I fare,—  
 Utterly new things everywhere.

Lo ! this must be Jerusalem,  
 He sees Or Rome whose sacred bulwarks stem  
 The Tiber's waves ; among the cities this  
 Newcastle- Must be the queen o' the world, to kiss  
 on-Tyne Whose dust kings come, and I am thought  
 and enters Worthy to be miraculously brought  
 Across the world to witness it,  
 the same. And to record the same. Here, as I sit,  
 Long ships come sailing past on wheels,  
 Burning internally, with towers that smoke  
 Furl out behind them ; hundreds of great keels  
 Masted and banner'd broad moles choke  
 With merchandise untold ; among  
 Those tall glass-windowed houses throng  
 Fair women, each more costly in her gear  
 Than Benedict himself, whose mass-cloths dear  
 To us from Rome came : on both hands  
 Booths with raiments from all strands,  
 Perfumes and spices, fruits and luxuries  
 Unknown to me, splendours that blind the eyes,  
 He hears And make the heart ache with too much. Anon  
 Ravishing music from the pavement-stone  
 a barrel- Springs up, but no musician I discern—  
 organ on Only a shrine-like hutch dragged by three hounds  
 And a man grinding :—wonderous quern,  
 the street ; From whence such wealth of goodliest sounds  
 Are brought so fast ! Oh, would our quair  
 Had known such help ! or is't the snare

Of Satan,—ear-delusion, vain  
 As goblin-gold whose only gain  
 Is a dry leaf? Now I wander o'er  
 A wilderness of smiths, with store  
 and now Of reeking furnaces, and cells made bright  
 he sees By magic flames from brazen bars as white  
 smiths' shops As sunshine : faces mild, horned hands,  
 Have these men ! Lo, through smoke-clouds black  
 Behemoth comes,—alack, alack !  
 and a With red eyes glaring in the gloom,  
 railway And many nostrils snorting spume ;  
 train. Behind it chariots numberless,  
 Windowed and gilt and bound with brass ;  
 Swift as a storm, they pant and blow  
 Along their iron way ; now slow,—  
 And docile they turn round ; they pause,  
 And from each chariot's ample jaws  
 Wells out a stream of folk. Can these  
 Be children of the 'Cursed one,  
 And this the land of Babylon  
 Apocalyptic, mirth and ease,  
 Gold and fine linen, mead and wine,  
 The only goods? I see no sign  
 Of faithful souls, of holy shrine,  
 Of learning, the priest's divining rod,  
 And yet the folk seem blessed by God.

But I am wrong ! right fortunate  
 Hath been my sleep so long and late,

And now my waking when the land  
 Seems filled with power, when soul and hand  
 Work equally, when God's ferule  
 Seems placed within man's grasp, to school  
 All nature, and with chains anneal'd  
 By knowledge bind the world.—Around,  
 He enters From pillared vault unto the ground,  
 Treasuries of fair books arise  
 the North Before these greedy grave-cleansed eyes.  
 of Books great and small, an ampler host  
 Than pope or patriarch could boast  
 England In the old time when Jarrow wall  
 Literary Rose as we thought so fair and tall,  
 And I, while daylight lasted, wore  
 Society's These fingers, adding to our store  
 library, Some five or six. Sure now I see  
 and Hath done the work, and, under God,  
 sees ten Brought angels down to help and guide,  
 thousand Wrought miracles on wind and tide,  
 Or else by necromantic lore  
 Man hath multiplied his store,  
 books. And, now forsaken and alone,  
 Neither God nor saint doth own.  
 Learning, the priest's rod no more,  
 Is the common staff in every hand,—  
 Evil, the tree of knowledge bore,

And now bears good, by which men stand  
Kings over nature.

## History

Is here too, sending present day  
Back on the past : each ancient scribe  
Glozed and sifted by the tribe  
Of scholiasts ; for the flow of years,  
With all their dusty blank arrears,  
Have changèd not humanity,  
Nor any law man liveth by.  
Ah, now I see my own poor name,  
My own books, saved from out the flame  
That tower and town wreck'd, graven fair,  
Fairly and excellently there ;  
Now no transcriber's fingers soil  
The sheepskin or the Latin spoil !  
And here I learn what time hath done  
Since my life ceased before the sun :  
How the Pagan's steel-scaled arm  
Strikes the land with deadly harm ;  
And Cuthbert's corse with weary hand  
Translate they to the Irish strand ;  
How soon again the Cross prevails,  
And the ship of the Church puts out her sails,  
Gladdening the prosperous centuries :—  
But read I right ? the people cries

Against her ; she no more gives alms  
 Of spiritual love-milk, but with shalms  
 And pipings drinks the secular wine :—  
 Read I right ? now clerk and lay  
 Each other in God's name burn and slay,  
 While o'er those foul fires rises still  
 A light as of the judgment-day,—  
 As of God's face behind a hill,  
 Before which all else wanes away ;  
 ' Freedom of faith for every man,  
 For God alone can bless or ban ;  
 Right of private judgment.' Nay,  
 Were these not always just ? again—  
 ' Reason, this life's law, we'll maintain  
 To be the law likewise between  
 Man and his Maker : by the seen  
 Measure we the unseen '—These  
 Are terrible words ; may Christ appease  
 Such questions : yet all round I see  
 The latest still is wisest in all gifts  
 Experience brings amidst our strife.  
 Surely the perilous hill of Science lifts  
 Us up above the ills of life :  
 Surely by Excellence in my old dim day,  
 And by its light the Church held sway,  
 And certes if the clerk fall off  
 Behind the laic, he becomes a scoff.  
 Surely God's word is not as ours to hold  
 One meaning only, soon effete and cold ;

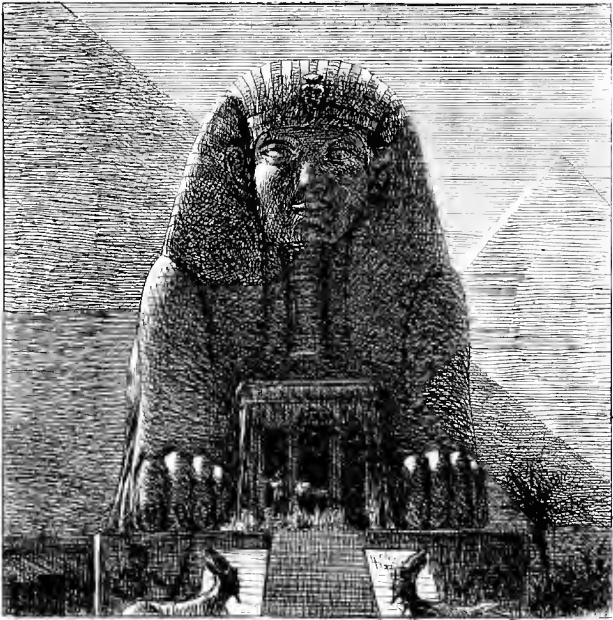


But, shining with a heaven-lit flame,  
It must illuminate all times the same.

He hears Sweet sounds of bells ! oh, dearly loved,—  
church Reproaching me that I have roved  
bells and Into the dangers of strange Liberty,  
tries to With duties self-sustained so dread and high.  
enter St. Let me be guided, goodly sounds of bells !  
Nicholas' Back like a child to these green wells  
Parish Whereat its mother, its young heart yet calm,  
Church. Taught it to drink from hollowed palm.  
Saintly sound ! I cheerfully,  
With all these princely people follow thee  
Up those wide stretching steps. Beneath  
This carven porch I hold my breath  
In wonder less than thankfulness  
That I once more my God confess.  
The gathered thousands, each and all  
Hold our Lord's Book graven small  
In their right hands ; and all can read !  
Let me rejoice that thus the seed  
I tried to sow hath borne so well,  
Despite the powers of earth and hell.  
Each man a clerk, perhaps a priest,—  
I enter to the sacred feast—  
I strive to enter, strive in vain :  
Some hidden girths my limbs restrain !

But the Ah! Holy Christ, I faint and quail,  
 As if under the wind of an iron flail.  
 Cardinal Holy Jesu, he calls again,  
 calls Renewing that resurrection pain,  
 Dispersing my so late-found gain,  
 him Yoking me round with a strangling chain,  
 Dragging me to him when I would fain  
 back. Rise and press onward : against my will,  
 As a staff in an old man's hand am I  
 Thrust about ingloriously,  
 Perinde cadaver !—recross I the hill,  
 Back to the sea-shore forced to fly ;—  
 Cardinal, master ! there he stands,  
 With rosy face and large red hands,  
 Clad all in scarlet !—Woe's me ! how  
 Can I go back to my old cell now !  
 Man clad in scarlet, who art thou ?  
 The whiff of death comes out of thee,  
 And the poor ancient childish past  
 Returns around me like the sea,  
 Drowning my new brave Life : I'm cast  
 Mistily sinking—oh, my God !  
 Lay me again beneath the sod.

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.



*TO THE SPHINX*

(CONSIDERED AS THE SYMBOL OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY).

I

THE silence and the darkness of the night  
The busiest day doth follow : moonless nights

And starless track Time's footsteps ; strongest things  
Still crumbling back into the caverned past.  
But thou, the earliest legend wrought in stone,  
The rock-bound riddle of an infant world,  
Within that terrible darkness standest still,  
Questioning now as then.  
I shut my ears to this day's cares, and hear,  
Vaguely across the centuries, the clang  
Of Coptic hammers round thy half freed limbs :  
Slaves with their whip-armed masters see I there ;  
Thousands like ants ; and priests, with noiseless feet,  
Passing around them with a serpent-coil ;  
And kings in crowned hoods, with great sceptres  
borne  
Before them ;—red men, and brown-skinned, and  
swart,  
From Nubia or the Isles : what sad resolve,  
What fear or inspiration or despair,  
Drive on those hordes that know not what they do ?

## II

Oracular, impassive, open-eyed,—  
Open-eyed without vision ; answerless,  
Yet questioning for life or death, as hath  
In later days been fabled,—round thy rest  
The scarabee, the snake, the circle-winged,  
And other symbols dark were as thy food,

Prepared for thee with cruelest rites and oaths  
Of secrecy ; innumerable gods  
Made life about thee slave to death, seared up  
Unchangeably, and in the grave wound in  
With undivulged negations of all hopes :  
So that the dead could only render back  
The sense of these dim-shadowed myths and creeds,  
That thou wert set to guard. Perhaps the bones  
Of Cheops in his firmest of all tombs  
Shook to disclose thy password from the dust  
And free man's heart by knowing he cannot know, —  
Shook when the priests' slow steps passed evermore  
Bearing another Pharaoh home,  
With baseless rites and fantasies of faiths,  
Devised like clashing symbols and loud drums  
To drown the victim's shrieks.  
And did not Cleopatra's eager blood  
Throb at the thought of thee,  
While her wide purple flaunted in the sun,  
And the white smoke of her fine perfumes spread  
From Cidnus to the unknown waste where now  
Ships pass uniting hemispheres by trade ?  
And yet, may be, she knew, because a queen,  
The riddle of thy birth and of thy watch  
Before the temple door. Her feverish brain  
Left her no heart except for Anthony.  
And then, as now,  
The winged seeds of autumn died amidst

The whirling sand-waste. Not beneath thy shade  
The sower walked. Joy fled thee, and desire  
Passed thee and knelt upon the marble floor :  
And still the passionate heart believes, and thou,—  
Thou sittest voiceless, without priest or prayer,  
As if thou wert self-born.

## III

And yet to whom, O Sphinx !  
Hast thou not ministered, and dost thou not,  
If we interpret rightly those blank eyes ?  
Beside the Isis-gates, the gates of stone,  
Have blood-red heroes and the sons of gods  
Uncrowned to thee. Around thy great smooth feet  
The hands of wandering Homer may have groped  
In his old blindness, while his eloquent lips  
Smiled gravely saturnine, as sad high thoughts  
Lightened across the hill-tops of his soul.  
The lyre of Hermes may have rung to thee,  
Before Dodona's leaves shook prophecies  
On slumbering votaries ; ere the white shafts rose  
Fluted on Delphi, or Athenian streets  
Had heard the voice of Socrates, nor yet  
Was there a Calvary in all the world.

## IV

The beacon-fire from Pharos shines to guide  
The beaked triremes with Sidon's wares  
And wine from Chios, and the Samian earth  
Transformed to gold by potters' artful hands :  
A while it shines and then the ships and wares  
Are changed : anon the stars are left again  
The only watchers. Temples and their shrines  
Before the Faith that brooks no rivals fall,  
And from the strife the conquering Christian shouts  
Against the demons, and the cenobite  
Hurries half naked by,  
Smiting thee with his crutch and palsied hand.  
In the far Thebaid's hermit-warren, weave  
Thy straws, blest cenobite ! for thou hast seen  
Bread brought to thee by ravens from heaven's  
board,—  
Souls carried upwards upon angels' wings ;  
And, like the red edge of averted thunder,  
Thou hast seen all the demons fall sheer down.  
Heaven waits for thee ; thy life throbs up in prayer,  
Shedding joy-tears into the passion-cup ;  
For these old wickednesses passed away—  
Alas ! and he too has now passed the same—  
And through the deepening sand about thy flanks  
Even thou, before the face of heaven,  
Appealeth for like burial with thy kin.

## v

Crossing the dusky stream  
On the chance stepping-stones of time,  
Descending the uneven stairs of myths  
Into our nature's cavern-gloom,  
Nigh breathless we become,  
As if the blood fled backward in the veins ;  
And when we turn again  
Into the even sunlight of to-day,  
The interests of the present seem no more  
Than fool's-play, wind in trees, an even-song ;  
And all our dear wise generation shrinks  
Into small grasshoppers, or clamouring storks  
That build frail nests on roofs of kingless towns,  
Uncertain as storm-scattered clouds, or leaves  
Heaped up as day shrinks coldly in.  
Yet art thou not, O Sphinx !  
The mere child's bauble that the man disowns  
With loftier knowledge, weightier cares ?  
Ah, no ; for evermore  
The question comes again  
Which nature cannot answer, but which thou,  
Watcher by temple-doors,  
Thou mightest have solved to entering worshippers,  
Making them turn away,  
Earthward, not starward, searching for their home.



Inward and not down beyond the tomb,  
Nor over Styx for fairer days than ours ;  
For night is certain on the further shore.  
Watch then, O Sphinx ! watch on,  
Before the temple doors of all the gods.

*A DEDICATION.*

(On publishing a Poem called 'The Year of the World.')

THOSE sober morns of spring are gone whose light  
 Made the leaves golden round the window-sill,  
 While pleasantly my task advanced from hour  
 To hour, until the last short page was full.  
 The kindling influence of the year just then  
 Had freed the butterfly, and the lightest breeze  
 Twirled its vacant winter-shell, to me  
 A sign and symbol, as I fondly deemed.  
 'Tis pleasant now in fair book-shape to see  
 What these sweet morns accomplished ; be it small,  
 Yet still a landmark in life's paths, an alms  
 Saved from oblivion and an indolent past.  
 Perhaps within its fabric not one thread  
 Of gold is woven, and those thoughts that weighed  
 Upon me as a duty weighs, till speech  
 And action free the conscience from its claim,  
 Will be to others uninformed and null :  
 Perhaps the sheep may bleat, the small dogs bark,  
 And not one man's voice answer me at all.

So be it : on the waters cast I still  
My bread, remembering it hath been to me  
The bread of life according to my light,  
For one full concord, one just harmony  
Between the chords of lyre and heart rebuilds  
The temple of the soul.

A labour still

Of love it hath been. With the name of love  
It shall be sanctified, and unto thee,  
Hopefullest friend ! do I now send it : thou  
Being the Mneme of past wandering years,  
And I the hero of mine own romance.  
Nor other reasons lack I, it may be,  
Although they might not sound so grand and grave.  
As this, a gentle critic wilt thou prove :  
Or this, if flowers but seldom deck the field,  
Thy love shall sow them broadcast.

But, no more ;

Eros is the great master, and his law  
It is we follow. Eros, child and God,  
With unshorn tresses that no crown confines,  
Teaches us much. This first ; that the great lamp  
Of Truth, whose naphtha needs no vestal's care,  
Shines not with holier splendours in the crypts  
Of book-philosophy and art-arcades,  
Wherein th' ambitious arm themselves for fame,

As the Athenian youths girt up their hair  
For the gymnasium, then in those dear bowers  
Of our humanity where amaranth grows  
With darnels, worts, and thistles. I have paused  
Oft-times midway in some laborious scheme,  
Asking myself the question,—What avails  
This strife, acquiring, losing, when to gain  
Or lose is non-essential, and but hangs  
Upon the outer husks of life? Reply  
Hath reached me from beyond our continent ;  
It was not I who toiled, cast off to-day  
Yesterday's motives, stands unchanged the soul  
The same as heretofore. Thus have I learned  
To throw no dice with fortune ; to remain  
Spectator more than actor. Truth descends  
Without our prayers and labour. Knowledge stands  
Apart from throned wisdom. Trivial things  
Minister oft like miracles, and reveal  
The narrow path for which we've searched in vain  
Through sleepless nights and over sloughs and seas.

*A RHYME OF THE SUN-DIAL.*

THE dial is dark, 'tis but half past-one :  
But the crow is abroad, and the day's begun.

The dial is dim, 'tis but half-past two :  
Fit the small foot with its neat first shoe.

The light gains fast, it is half-past three :  
Now the blossom appears all over the tree.

The gnomon tells it is but half-past four :  
Shut upon him the old school-door.

The sun is strong, it is half-past five :  
Through this and through that let him hustle  
and strive.

Ha, thunder and rain ! it is half-past six :  
Hither and thither, go, wander and fix.

The shadows are sharp, it is half past-seven :  
The Titan dares to scale even heaven !

The rain soon dries, it is half-past eight :  
Time faster flies, but it is not late !

The sky now is clear, it is half-past nine :  
Draw all the threads and make them entwine.

Clearer and calmer, 'tis half-past ten :  
Count we the gains ? not yet : try again.

The shadows lengthen, half-past eleven :  
He looks back, alas ! let the man be shriven !

The mist falls cold, it is half-past twelve :  
Hark, the bell tolls ! up, sexton, and delve !

*IN THE VALLEY.*

TRUSTING lambs about the door,  
 Entering sometimes on the floor ;  
 Timid ewes with simple eyes,  
 Looking for them in surprise.

With sunny days and busy feet,  
 Milkmaids' ditties sound so sweet,—  
 Ditties of contented life,  
 And love and hopes to be a wife.

Through our valley goes the road  
 To some prince's grand abode ;  
 A slope of cattle-pasturing green  
 Rises round, well hedged between.

With fallow fields in spring-time gray,  
 Past which winds the long highway ;  
 Travellers' heads a mile or more  
 Are seen descending to our door.

Sometimes the goddess Poverty  
 Greets us as she wanders by,  
 And calls the little birds to come  
 To pick from her thin hand the crumb.

Sometimes Hope, the youngest Grace  
Our lord set up in his high place,  
Going to seek for work somewhere,  
Or get apprenticed to old Care.

Sometimes Faith, with smile secure,  
Makes us feel we are not poor,  
To entertain such guests as these  
Upon our bench beneath the trees.

Sometimes 'tis Charity herself,  
Little children all her pelf,  
And our loved little ones run out  
To welcome hers with play and shout.

Jesus then the white bread bears,  
And naked John the water shares  
In a white cup to every one  
Resting from the mid-day sun.



*MAY.*

(IN A LONDON LODGING.)

DOUBTLESS now in Wetherel woods  
The white lady-garlic spreads,  
And young ferns hold their wise conclaves,  
All nodding their crozier-heads.

There too the last year's bramble sweeps  
The Eden's arrowy swell,  
And the cuckoo over the larches dark  
You'll hear if you listen well.

May is with us, and I am pent  
In the city's huge recess,  
But prison-bars nor walls of stone  
Can shut out spring's caress.

Over the roofs from the fields far off  
Fresh influences hie,  
Shading the hair from the cool forehead,  
Touching it tenderly.

Open the window, let the breeze  
About these brown books play,  
And, hark ! the caged bird opposite  
Knows well that it is May.

Sing louder yet ! perhaps both thou  
And I enjoy it more  
Within this populous wilderness  
Than roaming wild woods o'er.

Oh, welcome now to come and go,  
You early weak-winged bee !  
My primrose pots and crocuses  
Are splendid, as you see.

I fear your sturdy hopefulness  
Already hath gone astray ;  
Or came you here to teach me sing  
A song to suit the day ?

Yes, the summer's feast is spread,  
Her wine is poured out free ;—  
Mignon ! I could desire no more  
If I but shared with thee !

Where art thou now,—in hawthorn lane ?  
Or housed with some dull guest ?  
I'll think of thee, and some have said  
Our fancied joys are best.

But while the mavis sings above,  
    And the cowslip dots the mead,  
If we together heard his song,  
    'Twere a pleasanter May indeed !





## SONNETS

ON LITERARY SUBJECTS.



*ON THE INSCRIPTION, KEATS'  
TOMBSTONE.*

(ENGLISH CEMETERY, ROME.)

COULD we but see the Future ere it comes,  
 As gods must see effects in causes hid,—  
 How calmly could we wait till we were bid !  
 Heroes would hear their triumph's far-off drums,  
 Would see Fame's splendours ere the threads and  
       thrums  
 Had formed them in to-morrow's living loom ;  
 Would feel the honours round the future tomb,  
 Across the sunless fosse where life succumbs.

If it were so ! But wiser fates conspire  
 That each shall bear his own lamp through the night,  
 Showing but short way round its blood-red light,  
       And find, by it alone, the herb that springs  
 Fast by the wells of fathomless desire ;  
       And of this healing herb the poet sings.

*WORDSWORTH.*

(ON READING THE MEMOIRS BY DR. C. WORDSWORTH.)

## I.

Too much of 'Tours,' productive more or less ;  
 Too much of 'Nature,' meaning thereby hills,  
 Trees, hedges, landscapes rich with woods and rills ;  
 Too little of the dark divine recess  
 Beneath the white shirt,—nothing of the press  
 Of our own age so full of glorious cares,  
 And men that call, new lamps for old ! good wares  
 For potsherds given ! in this book I confess.

Yet through it evermore appears in sight  
 A poet travelling homeward who was still  
 A poet every day, with common tread  
 Who walked on common shoes up Life's high hill  
 Self-center'd, God-directed, till the light  
 Of this world and the next met round his head.



*WORDSWORTH.*

## II.

CUMBERLAND was the world to him and art  
 Was landscape-gardening. Most sententiously  
 A truism or a common-place could he  
 Announce, and by his grave large voice impart  
 Value thereto. Steered by the simplest heart  
 'Tis said he never doubted, but held on  
 Bible o'erpowered : in these our days alone  
 Of all sane men perhaps in learning's mart !

But he of all men planned his life with care :  
 Fast by the wells of sadness walked he on  
 O'er fortunate meads with chilly flowers made fair,  
 Till on his right hand and his left were won  
 The waving wheatears of a just success ;  
 A man whose praise rejoice we to express !

## WORDSWORTH.

## III.

EACH medal hath its reverse ; every day  
     Its cloud ; each house its skeleton ; so here,  
     Sum up this philosophic poet's year,  
 And we shall find within his mental way,  
 Few threads of vital poet-wisdom stray.  
     Instead ; philanthropy with hand withheld,  
     A caution selfward turned, the muse compell'd  
 To chew the cud, to sift the sand and clay  
 Left by chance hill-winds, lest some grains of gold  
     Without assiduous sieve might there be lost. .  
 A bald soul awkward with his lyre, both cold  
     And over-anxious, find we to our cost :  
 And this the moral of the whole ; *that* man  
 Is great who simply doth the best he can.

*TO THE ARTISTS CALLED P. R. B.*

(1851.)

I THANK you, brethren in Sincerity,—  
 One who, within the temperate climes of Art,  
 From the charmed circle humbly stands apart,  
 Scornfully also, with a listless eye  
 Watching old marionettes' vitality ;  
 For you have shown, with youth's brave confidence,  
 The honesty of true speech and the sense  
 Uniting life with ' nature,' earth with sky.

In faithful hearts Art strikes its roots far down,  
 And bears both flower and fruit with seeded core ;  
 When Truth dies out, the fruit appears no more,  
 But the flower hides a worm within its crown.  
 God-speed you onward ! once again our way  
 Shall be made odorous with fresh flowers of May.

*ON CERTAIN CRITICS AT THE BEGINNING  
OF THE CENTURY.*

THE poet lives indeed. Within the schools  
 He may or may not have tried on his arms,  
 Or learnt their dext'rous use : but free of harms  
 He must have dived and braved the whirling pools  
 Of his own heart, and o'er the heads of fools  
 And unbelievers, teachers, priests, tipstaves,  
 Or censors, held his own, breasting the waves  
 Of martyrdom, smiling like one who rules.

And here's the poet's judge ! whose learned speech  
 Of tropes and classics, fixed authorities,  
 Smells stale, whose outside confidences teach  
 His fellow-philistines to dogmatise,  
 Till vulgar scoffers even invade the skies—  
 Turn, poet ! lift thy foot against his breech.

*THE EPITAPH OF HUBERT VAN EYCK.*

(CARVED ON THE SHIELD HELD BY A MARBLE SKELETON,  
CATHEDRAL OF ST. BAVON, GHENT.)

WHOE'ER thou art who walkest overhead,  
Behold thyself in stone : for I yestreen  
Was seemly and alert like thee : now dead,  
Nailed up and earthed, and for the last time green,  
The first spring greenness and the last decay,  
Am hidden here for ever from the day.  
I, Hubert Van Eyck, whom all Bruges hailed  
Worthy of lauds, am now with worms engrailed.  
My soul with many pangs by God constrained  
Fled in September when the corn is wained,  
Just fourteen hundred years and twenty-six  
Since Christ Himself was our first crucifix.  
Lovers of Art, pray for me that I gain  
God's grace, nor find I've worked and lived in vain.

*FRAGMENT OF A SONNET BY RAPHAEL.*

(FOUND WRITTEN ON THE BACK OF A SKETCH.)

‘ As Paul when he descended from his trance  
 Could utter nought of the divine arcane,—  
 So hidden in my heart my joys remain  
 Lovingly veiled from all unhallowèd chance.  
 How much I see, how much I do and bear,  
 Clothing with placid smile the secret pain,  
 Which I could just as easy change the hair  
 Upon this brow as render up profane——

Thus far the master, the divine Raphael,  
 Who died before his brown locks had uncurled,  
 And left so much,—yet from whose hand we hail  
 This fragment now across a changing world.  
 Finish it, reader!—genius, fortune, fame!  
 Thrice crowned, love’s tangled skein remains the same.

*THE MUSICIAN.*

His sense transcends this world : the Muses' heaven  
 Is where his soul was born, a wondrous child ;  
 Instinct above the intellect is given  
 To the Musician ; wordless, unlearned, wild,  
 Fancies of heart are his realities,  
 And over us as o'er base things he flies  
 Towards absorption in the harmonies  
 Of spheres unknown. Alas, within the maze  
 Of the actual world, hills, cattle, ships, and town,  
 Knowledge accumulative, mace and gown,  
 Wealth, science, law, he like a blind man strays !  
 Yet, wondrous child, be nevermore cast down,  
 Men hear thy fiddle-bow, and lose their pains,—  
 Compared to thee they are but serfs in chains.

*TO MY BROTHER,*

ON PUBLISHING HIS 'MEMOIR, ETC.'

MY brother, latest of so many, passed  
Across the unknown dark sea, where we all  
Must follow, as our days and hours are cast :  
I speak to thee, I touch the dreadful pall,  
To lay thine own bay-leaves upon thy bier.  
It may be in the arcane truths of God,  
Thou still dost feel this touch, dost feel and hear,  
And recognizest still the cold green sod,  
Immensely far yet infinitely near !  
Thou who hast shown how much the steadfast soul  
Bears abnegation, how an ideal goal  
Robs life, how singleness of heart hopes long,  
And how, by suffering sanctified, the song  
From the inner shrine becomes more just and strong.



*SANDRART'S INSCRIPTION,*

ON ALBERT DÜRER'S GRAVE, NÜRNBERG.

REST here, thou Prince of Painters, thou who wast  
better than great,  
In many arts unequalled in the old time or the late.  
Earth thou didst paint and garnish, and now, in thy  
new abode,  
Thou paintest the holy things overhead in the city of  
God.  
And we, as our patron saint, look up to thee ever  
will,  
And crown, with a laurel crown, the dust left here  
with us still.





OCCASIONAL SONNETS.



*PYGMALION.*

‘MISTRESS of gods and men ! I have been thine  
 From boy to man, and many a myrtle rod  
 Have I made grow upon thy sacred sod,  
 Nor ever have I passed thy white shafts nine  
 Without some votive offering for the shrine,  
 Carved beryl or chased bloodstone ;—aid me now,  
 And I will live to fashion for thy brow  
 Heart-breaking priceless things : oh, make her mine.’

Venus inclined her ear, and through the Stone  
 Forthwith slid warmth like spring through sapling-  
 stems,  
 And lo, the eyelid stirred, beneath had grown  
 The tremulous light of life, and all the hems  
 Of her zoned peplos shook—upon his breast,  
 She sank by two dread gifts at once oppressed.

*THE SWAN.*

WITH broad soft breast, with pliant neck and long  
     To reach the small fish down among the reeds,  
     Hitherward scattering the fresh water-beads  
 The snowy beauty comes. O fair and strong,  
 Thou Laïs, queen of pleasure, with my song  
     I would enrich thee were it worthier,  
     And if it could be but the minister  
 Of love, that to such goddess should belong.

So I held out to her this page where lay  
 Some dainty fruits, and flowers, a rare bouquet ;—  
     Whereat she smote her ample wings abroad,  
 Raised her black mouth from whence a bruised worm  
     fell,  
 And hissed, as good deeds may be hissed in hell :  
     The spray fell over me upon the sod.

*SPRING LOVE.*

FROM morn to evening, this day, yesterday,  
We've walked within the garden'd paths of love,  
Till the moon rose the darkening woods above :  
We've seen the blossoming apple's crimson spray,  
And watched the hiving bees work lustily,  
As if their time was short as it was sweet :  
Along love's meadow-lands too, with glad feet,  
We've welcomed all the wild flowers come with May.

Bend thy sweet head ; I've strung this long woodbine  
With primroses and cowslips—golden prize  
For golden hair, and flowers that best express  
The opening of the year, the mild sunshine,  
And the frank clearness of those trusting eyes,  
Through which there gleams scarce-trusted  
blessedness.

*AN ANNIVERSARY.*

MADONNA! all the year's sweet flowers are dead ;  
Christmas is come, and now thou art mine own.  
When first I saw thee in thy girlhood's gown,  
Within the myrtle hedge of maidenhood,  
Waiting, your frank brow with its auburn snood,  
Like an enchanted tower girt round with fire,  
I thought, ah me! how can I so aspire;—  
And now for years our lives as one have sped.

Since then what wild adventures we've essayed ;  
What jesting comedies our fates have played !  
'Tis now long since I ceased to look on thee  
With wonder : that head lies by mine all night ;  
Thou art a book read three times o'er to me,  
And yet thy last words are quite infinite.



*THE MIDNIGHT CITY.*

PAST these tall houses and closed doors we wind,  
Nor ever any living thing we meet,  
Along each dimly lamp-lit, clean-swept street :  
Bolted and barred within, the human kind,  
Like Egypt's mummied dead, lie still and blind,  
Stretched out beneath the hands of sleep and night;—  
Will they indeed re-wake with morning's light ?  
An awful thing this lifeless town I find.

'Tis strange to think too, eons long ago,  
Ere any eyes or any hearts were here,  
These stars shone out the same—unnumbered, clear ;  
And at this moment where warm breezes blow,  
Filling the sails that left our quays last year,  
The sun lights up another hemisphere !

*KISSES.*

## I.

WITHIN her lips my mistress, then a child,  
     Held up a crumb to her caged bird ; and I,  
     A stripling, very awkwardly stood by,  
 Lost in presentiment ;—was't but a mild  
 Girl's coquetry, and was my heart beguiled ?  
     Or was it earnest of the days to be,  
     When I too, like that linnet, no more free,  
 By those dear lips am fed and reconciled ?

A crumb of bread sometimes—the bread of life,  
     And sometimes but a worthless sugarplum,  
     To her new slave those rounded lips present,  
 Now very gently, then in well-feigned strife ;  
     Beforehand I can't tell what next may come,  
     So I look forward, very well content.

*KISSES.*

## II.

WHO can tell why Queen Venus raised the dove  
 To be her bird? Why not the statelier swan,  
 Seamew or albatross? Our Queen began  
 In sea sun-smitten, and the wave-foam wove  
 Her only veil;—What charioteer for Love  
 Were better, and what lovelier thing is there  
 Than swan full winged, and for the wilder pair,  
 Do they not triumph tides and storms above?

I think it must have been the turtle's claim  
 To the arcane invention of the kiss,  
 That taught the Golden Age how first to woo!  
 But now-a-days we would be much to blame,  
 Needing such lessons in love's lore as this;  
 So let us hope we are her love-birds too.

*THE TRAVELLER LOST.*

THAT winding pathway on this windless day,  
     With flowering turfs and pebbles here and there ;  
     That hawthorn-hedge irregularly bare  
 And blossoming ; the sky-lark far away ;—  
 That very twig and leaf and clambering spray :  
     And now behind me, from the unseen shore,  
     A curlew !—Yes, I have been here before,  
 And God hath brought me back another way.

One instant ! the memorial sense has flown,  
     Leaving all blank as the Atlantic tides  
     Fronting Columbus : it was like the moon  
 To the half awake,—as if I had gone down  
     That fabulous well where Truth from mortals hides,  
     And, looking up, beheld the stars at noon !

*THE NIGHTINGALE UNHEARD.*

Is that the much-desired, the wondrous wail  
 Of the brown bird by poets loved so long ?  
 Nay, it is but the thrush's rich clear song  
 Through the red sunset rung ; but down the vale,  
 Beneath the starlight, never do we fail  
 To hear the love-lorn singer : still and dark  
 Above our heads the black boughs arch ; and, hark !  
 A wild short note—another—then a trail  
 Of loud clear song is drawn athwart the glow,  
 Filling the formless night with cheerfulness.  
 But sure we know that melody full well,—  
 The dear old blackbird ! Let's no further go ;  
 There's no brown bird ;—Ye poets all, confess  
 That Fancy only is your Philomel.

*IN ROME, A.D. 150.*

(FOR A PICTURE.)

FACE against face the New Faith meets the Old :  
 The New with its inspiring hopes of life  
 Beyond the Agape and all earth-strife,  
 God-guided through an alien world, with cold  
 Postponement of the triumph-crown of gold ;  
 The Old irresolute and faint of heart,  
 But loving all sweet things, and flowers, and art,  
 That deifies nature's fashions manifold.

Sceptre and wreath, they ask for : ' Now, this hour  
 Be kind to us, O Gods ; let us not dare  
 And lose the prize ; let the sun shine to-day,  
 The song be heard ! ' but gone is all their power ;  
 Their eyes are dark ; a cry is in the air :  
 ' Awake ! arise, arise, and come away ! '

*COMING AND GOING.*

In the bright margin of the salt sea tide,  
    Flooding the sands, his tiny shallop tries  
    A boy, with new delights in his clear eyes ;  
Wading far in and watching it with pride  
Tacking, returning, as the wavelets guide ;  
    Until the ebb set in unknown to him,  
    And then across the seas into the dim  
Green waste he saw his little frigate ride !

Will it sail on for ever and a day,  
    Or will they hail it from some new strange land?  
Why went it from me at the last away ?  
He asked, and empty-handed turned to go.  
    And often wandering on life's wave-worn strand,  
Perplexèd, he questions still that ebb and flow.

*MY MOTHER.*

(ST. LEONARDS, EDINBURGH, 1826.)

## I.

A PEBBLED pathway led up to the door  
 Where I was born, with holly hedge confined,  
 Whose leaves the winter snows oft interlined ;  
 Oft now it seems, because the year before  
 My sister died, we were together more,  
 And from the parlour window every morn  
 Looked on that hedge, while mother's face, so worn  
 With fear of coming ill, bent sweetly o'er.

And when she saw me watching, smile would she,  
 And turn away with many things distraught ;  
 Thus was it manhood took me by surprise,  
 The sadness of her heart came into me,  
 And everything I ever yet have thought  
 I learned then from her anxious loving eyes.



*MY MOTHER.*

(PORTOBELLO, NEAR EDINBURGH, 1851.)

## II.

THERE was a gathered stillness in the room,  
 Only the breathing of the great sea rose  
 From far off, aiding that profound repose,  
 With regular pulse and pause within the gloom  
 Of twilight, as if some impending doom  
 Was now approaching ;—I sat moveless there,  
 Watching with tears and thoughts that were like  
 prayer,  
 Till the hour struck,—the thread dropped from the  
 loom ;  
 And the Bark passed in which freed souls are borne.  
 The dear stilled face lay there ; that sound forlorn  
 Continued ; I rose not, but long sat by :—  
 And now my heart oft hears that sad seashore,  
 When she is in the far-off land, and I  
 Wait the dark sail returning yet once more.

1871.

*ASSISTANCE DELAYED.*

HAD that hand hailed me and that cheerful song,  
 Had that good chance befallen me, while the blood  
 Was juvenescent, and the vista long,  
 And life's mid-year unbridged : while yet all-good  
 Appeared the triumphs to be won, the men  
 Who *had* attained, all gods, amidst the mist  
 Blood-red o'er youth's long sunrise. Doubtless then  
 Proudly had I leapt forth and dared the best,  
 Either with tricks fantastic, or high faith  
 And art,—the best that in this right arm lay !  
 But now the game seems boy's play : keep your breath  
 To cool your pottage, wise old proverbs say.  
 The world still grudgingly unties her store :  
 Fame and reward are ours when they are prized no  
 more.

*UNWORTHY AMBITION.*

(ON THE PORTRAITS OF LORDS BROUGHAM AND  
LYNDHURST.)

To rise up step by step from hall to daïs ;  
 To take the best seat at the best repast,  
 While adulating eyes are toward him cast  
 By the upstanding hungry ; to have praise  
 From those he scorns : to see the base hand raise  
 The limp hat to him as he hastens by,  
 Not deigning to return the courtesy ;  
 To ride while others tramp the miry ways.

These are the honours of a hot-breathed world,  
 These the civilian honours, these the prize  
 In church or bar. Behold that wig deep-curled,  
 The symbol of a long life's toil, those eyes  
 Below it like a tipstaff's !—shut thine own,  
 And think of Christ or of the sky star-sown !



*MUSIC OF THE SPHERES.*

(1837; REVISED 1872.)

All things were created by numbers, and again it must be so.

PLA10.

THE Angel of Death through the dry earth slid,  
 Like a mole to the Dervish Yan,  
 Lying beneath the turf six feet,  
 Till he reached the coffin and smote its lid

With his hammer that wakes the Mosleman ;  
And whispered thus through board and sheet,  
‘ Arise, that thy closed eye and ear  
The things that Are may see and hear ! ’  
The Dervish turned him round, and rose  
On his knees at the sound of the three dread blows :  
He was alive and a man again,  
Yet he felt no earth, nor of it thought,  
But rose without a strain.

Friends wept aloud for the Dervish Yan,  
And a wife she wept for a Christian man,  
A long train of mutes had but lately laid  
Under the sward in the cool green shade  
Of a sanctified wall whose stones divide  
The earth where heretic corpses hide,  
From that set apart for the faithful alone,  
And over him carved his name on a stone ;  
But the dead man laughed as he woke below,  
For he rejoiced at wakening so,—

‘ I am awake, awake and well ;  
Am I myself indeed, and where ?—  
Here is no light, here is no air,  
Here is neither heaven nor hell.’

The Angel of Death stooping clasped his hand,  
And silenced him, whispering, ‘ I command  
The power whose song shall answer thee, —  
As it hath been, so shall it be.’

Beneath the head  
When the Jew is dead  
Is a clod of quick clay kneaden :  
And as the mourners backward go,  
Three turfs, green turfs, to the grave they throw,  
Saying, 'Thou shalt like these green turfs grow,  
May thy soul be buried in Eden.'  
Thus in the Levites' vault was laid  
A Rabbi, thus were the last rites paid,  
At the same time that the Summoner  
Made the two Gentile corses stir,  
And with a writhe like theirs, his eyes  
The Rabbi opening, tried to rise.  
'Have the demons power o'er me?' he cries,  
Dragging himself with painful toil  
From the mould which is the earth-worm's spoil,  
And trembled to hear the words 'Follow thou too,  
Within the sphere of the melody  
That re-createth those who die !'

And thus have these three mortals passed,  
Being dead, into the formless vast,  
Which we in life, expectant, still  
By creeds and myths and fancies, fill  
With hopes and fears like life on earth,—  
Things for the days 'tween death and birth,  
For which we care not any more  
Down upon the further shore.

- ‘ By what uncertain sense we’re led,  
Born thus again—the body dead  
Our mother—the grave our nursing bed !
- ‘ Haunted still with hearth and home,  
Hammer in hand, sword, pen, and tome,  
Sun and moon and starry dome.
- ‘ Morn till evening toil-in-vain,  
Market loss and market gain,  
Restless sea and wheaten plain.
- ‘ Down the darkness go we still,  
Go we without choice of will ;  
From Gentile’s scoff and scorners’ rail,  
From worm and asp, from kiss and wail ;  
From master’s whip, Muezzim’s cry,  
Camel and rice, and blank white sky.
- ‘ Carried or driven, through sea, through air,  
Carried sheer down by cloud or stair,  
Are we or are we not—whither away ?  
Phantom’s of life’s fever-day.  
Can we not return again,  
As leaves come after spring-time’s rain ?  
The trumpet cannot call the dead,  
Yet I hear it overhead ;  
A madman’s sleep is thick and brief ;  
The dawn would give us all relief !—

Ah, 'tis gone, and thou, the dearest !  
Thou with moonlike light appearest ;  
Thou, mine own, beside the hearth,  
Assiduous with childish mirth—  
Dreams, only dreams ! the past doth cry,  
In the throes of dissolving memory.  
O brother spectres who have come  
Out of yourselves,—oh, can ye tell,  
Rise we or sink—to heaven or hell?  
But even now with my own old eyes  
I saw the ghost of myself arise ;  
And then forthwith I was beguiled  
To think myself again a child.  
But what, alas ! are those below  
That to and fro  
Pass like men walking fast, and then  
Pass the very same again ?  
Alike they are, even every one,  
Not as men beneath the sun ;—  
Now they stalk our heads above,  
Now beneath our feet they move,  
Now they pass through us quite, as though  
Shadows with like shadows blent,  
Shadows from some real things sent,  
We their shadows cannot know !  
Gone, gone, gone ! a fiery wind  
Severs the vision, and mountain or flood,  
City or temple, or cedar-wood,



Or rock-walls with their multitude  
Of caverns void and blind,  
Fragments of this baseless world,  
About us are flashed out and furled ;  
And phantoms without number vast,  
Interlace the insane dream,  
Hurtle together, and never get past :  
And a leprous light, a light and breath,  
Like the phosphor in the eyes of Death,  
Follows each phantom ; down they stream,  
Wingless, from above descending,  
Straight and stiff ; nor is the hair  
On their rigid shoulders pending  
Stirred by any fitful air.  
Together they rush now, from near and far,  
As if around a central war,  
And now in circles whirl, while we—  
We cleave the whirlpool steadily.  
If any god still hears our wail,  
For an hour again  
Let us be men,  
Or now cease utterly and fail  
To know ourselves, to think and be !

‘ Hath our prayer been heard? Ah, no ;  
Spectres that have never trod  
Earth with man or heaven with God  
Rise stark and slow ;

Rings of gold  
About their corded locks are rolled,  
Dreadful symbols of dead creeds,  
And dripping brands  
Are in their hands ;—  
Naked giants ! how they hold  
By the nostrils monstrous steeds !  
They meet, they rush together : now  
The furies of battle are over all,  
And some struggle upwards in pain, some fall  
Sheer through the seething gulf below ;—  
Allah el Allah, how are we  
In this collapsing death-strife free ?  
Oh, that we could dissolve at once  
To nothingness ;—advance,  
Ye barbed giants ! smoke and fire  
Lap us round till we expire,—  
Expire, cease utterly and fail  
To retract ourselves, to think and be !

Thus the dead men from the grave  
Wailed as they went ; but who can say  
How to paint the unknown way  
Within the wondrous door of death ?  
Or what the mysteries are that pave  
The path to New Life, when the breath  
And senses cease to be, as now,  
The guardians of our souls ? The plough

Casts up bones where warriors trod,  
Belted, plumed, and iron-shod ;  
Those shreds the plough exhumes, I deem,  
Little like the warriors seem.

Two lights, two haloed lights appear,  
Round like the moon at the fall of the year,  
When the sky is mantled o'er  
With a fleece of mist, and of all the store  
Of stars, not one can penetrate  
To the traveller's eye till the night be late.  
Two haloes slowly and steadily  
Advancing like a double day,  
Increasing in beauty more and more ;—  
Behold ! they are the tires of light  
On the heads of gods, and a golden sound,  
Swooning and recreating, wound  
From those two haloes, passed right round  
The dead men's hearts with a painful might.  
Would I could say  
Whose voices or whose harps were they,  
That had such vital force divine,  
Holy Spirit, like to thine !  
But what was the song  
That bore along  
These weary ghosts with a power so strong?  
If we could repeat that lay  
In the light of upper day,

It might unravel warp and woof  
Of this prisoned conscious Life  
Tear all sensuous ties aloof;  
Of good and ill unwind the strife:  
Interweave it with amaranth again,  
Die it with nepenthe bloom,  
That we no more knew sin or pain,  
Nor feared the darks beyond the tomb!

But what was the song  
That bore along  
Those dead hearts with a power so strong?  
Would I could repeat the lay  
In the dull light of this cold day;  
Wean the soul from the thirst to know,  
By wisdom be as gods, that so  
The slave unmanacle his hand,  
The ploughshare rest upon the land.

When the sound of the wires  
Of those holy lyres  
Had the dead men's lives remade,  
Did their shadows remain in the world of shade,  
Their flesh in the earth  
That gave it birth?  
Then in what were they arrayed?  
But the child just born forgetteth quite  
Its ante-natal garments; night

And utter change doth interpose,  
And when this life over the body doth close,  
And the freed Soul hears without ears the hymn,  
Sphere-music of God's cherubim,  
And sees the haloed powers below,—  
Utterly changeth it also ;  
And after the new birth again  
Forget the ante-natal gain ?  
We cannot know.

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JUVENILE POEMS.





*TO THE MEMORY OF PERCY BYSSHE  
SHELLEY.*

(1831.)

WHERE is Alastor gone,—  
The fairy queen's own latest born,  
Where is he gone?  
Has the far-scenting roe-buck at the time  
Appointed, shed his antlers? does the pride  
Of the wide solitary forests lie  
Moss-overgrown in slimy lizard's nook?  
Has the swift ostrich of the desert lost  
The long limb of her strength, and laid her down  
On the hard earth, which erewhile her feet spurned,  
Where mole and burrowing owl,  
And red-eyed weazel, prowls?

Must he too die like other men,  
Who lived not like them? He who knew no world  
Outside the heart ;—  
The spirit whose home was the adytum lit  
By phantasies as by the stars in their  
Blueness of wondrous height ; each thought a world

As are the stars, pursuant of its end  
 Of being ; speculating, working, strong,  
     Having its rayings wrought  
     Around its brother thought.

    An earthless garden grew  
 Around him, aromatic laurel boughs  
     Waved twining there :  
 Flowers of Arcadian nature strengthened there,  
 Transplanted from the wizard's world of dream,  
 Yea, the old wizard's wand itself did shoot  
 Like the high priest's, and gave strange blossoming,  
 And fruit intoxicating mightily.  
 And a bright rainbow'd shower fell glitteringly  
 From the most holy font of his clear soul,  
     Upon this gardened plain  
     Where Fancy held her reign.

    A shrine was in the midst  
 Luxuriously bedecked in its own fire,  
     As is the sun.  
 And his heart beat, and his brain whirled, when he  
 Turned to it ; and words leaped forth from his tongue  
 As its light glorified him, Memnon-like ;  
 And the words were, as pundit, sanscrit-learned,  
 Revivifies from times of demi-gods,  
 Drawn from the deepest wells of consciousness,  
 The world received not ; but he proudly passed

The world, and carol'd to  
Himself as prophets only do.

The goddess of that shrine  
No man hath e'er held commune with, nor seen  
With mortal eye,

But thou, wild wingless angel, didst not pause,  
But entered to the blaze where spirits alone  
Can worship ; and didst make libations till  
Thou wast so purified, men knew thee not.

Would I could trace thy footsteps up the porch  
And to the altar there, so that I too

Would sacrifice in ruth  
To thee who worshipp'd TRUTH.

Few mourners have appeared :  
And meet it is ; for he was ever grieved  
By others' grief :

Few staves are lifted for the pilgrimage  
To follow him ; few of the busy world  
Can go up to the realms where he did go ;  
Or breathe the atmosphere he breathed ; or cast  
The old shell off, and come forth cleansed as he ;

Few, few have striven  
To make earth heaven.

Men say that he fell blind  
By daring to approach this source of Light ;  
That he fell lame

By travelling far in desperate paths : even so—  
 Yet reverence we not the martyr ? None  
 Are left us like him ; none are left to tune  
 The cythera, as he did tune it o'er  
 The white spring flowers on Adonais' grave :  
 Lone Adonais and Alastor lone !  
 Their spirits went together ; and their earths  
 Resolved each to the elements they loved,—  
     One to sunshine and storm,  
     One flowers and fruits to form.

    Sage follows sage afar ;  
 Dark lapse of time between, now marked alone  
     By their advent.  
 As star by star arises on the night,  
 Up through the shades of time past they appear  
 In lambent haloes burning steadily.  
 Revolving onward, the eternal wheel  
 Circles ; and still a shine from these wan flames,  
 God-kindled, follows on. Another flame,  
     Subtle as lightning,  
     Is added to the brightening.

    Still poets reappear,  
 And still the glow doth thicken to the dawn.  
     Redness of morn  
 Gilds our horizon soon ! Alastor, thou  
 Shalt be our guide into the unknown time ;

And we will bind about thy cenotaph  
The laurel and the olive, and the rose,  
The poppy and perennial ivy too ;  
Glow-worms shall glimmer through the dark green  
leaves,  
And great sphynx-moths fly round it evermore.  
And when our many chains are burst,  
We'll say, 'Alastor, thou wast first.'

*TO THE MEMORY OF JOHN KEATS.*

(1832 ; revised.)

THOU dark-haired love-child, passed  
 Beyond the censer's odour and its dust,  
     Enamoured life,  
 So weak and yet so beautiful thou wert,  
 A reverential wish doth draw me thus  
 To rise to thee with measured words, when now  
 No one regards the poet's quivering string,  
 Since thine was hushed, who brought the myrtle here  
     From perfect Arcadie, whose verse  
     Young earth's freshness could rehearse.

Would that my tears were such  
 As in the wakening morning, from its leaves  
     That myrtle drops ;  
 They might be worthy of thy sodded grave,  
 And sympathetic strengthening afford  
 To me, the mourner, bending over it,  
 Until the modern world is rolled away,  
 And all the splendours of the earlier time  
 Come down upon this leaden life of ours,

Through an unfolding sky,  
Trembling in melody.

A bier for earth's beloved !  
Trees of Dodona's murmuring prophesies,  
Scatter your leaves,  
Strewn on the wintry bareness of the clay !  
Let the sharp blanching eddies of the storm  
Whirl them around the fossed wall where the dead,  
The heretic dead, repose beside the tombs  
Of ancient Romans, whose songs knew no blight  
Of horrors mediæval, but were filled  
With blooms and odours from the golden age :  
Leaves of the cold last year  
Cover his wintry bier.

Through the stripped pergola  
The wind wails low, the hard soil blackens round  
The dead flower-stem ;  
Sunk in wet weeds foul rottenness consumes  
The pleasant things that were, as it must be  
When the wheat falls, to be the bread for us ;  
And what the thresher leaves the night-wind sweeps :  
After the curfew comes the silent hour :  
Night reigns most dark before  
Morn's breezes evermore.

No eventide was thine,  
But like the young athlete from the bath,

For one brief hour,  
 You stood in the arena yet uncrowned,  
 Doubtful, although beyond all venturers strong ;  
 Yes, strong to guide Hyperion's coursers round  
 The love-inscribèd zodiac of all time :  
 Thou youth, who in the gardens Athenine,  
 The noblest sage had leant upon with pride,  
 And called thee Musagætes, and thy lyre  
     Wreathed with the bay  
     Of the god of day.

Not thus, not thus, indeed,  
 The over-crowded noisy stage received  
     Thy artful song ;  
 But now the numerous voices have stilled down,  
 The stage is filled with actors hailing thee,  
 Hailing thee all too late : the winter's gone,  
 The dreadful tears are dried that wet the couch  
 Of thy farewell ; the flowers, the fruits, have come ;  
     The firmament of fame  
     Surrounds thee as with flame.

And why should we lament  
 The bitterness that marred not—nay, made pure  
     And free of fear ?  
 We do not think the Beautiful was soiled,  
 The melody made less joyful to his ear ;  
 And all else is gone past for evermore,



Or hangs about him like a thin dark veil,  
Round the great lustrous limbs now deified :  
    Suffering is a hymn,  
    Sung by the seraphim.

    But not for songs like his,—  
A mortal bound to earth by all the ties  
    Of subtlest sense,  
And art unsatisfied, untamed, and force  
Beyond that known by fettered schoolmen's brains :  
Stronger than nimblest faun, behold him dance  
Before the wine-fed leopards ; hear him shout,  
Io Iacche ! the meridian sun  
Browns his bare breast,—dead is he, or but gone  
Into the shade to rest his cymballed hands ?  
    Bacchus hath but shed  
    Slumber on his dark eyelid.

    He sleeps, and dreams perchance,—  
Still dreams, of kisses from the crescented  
    Queen of the stars ;  
Or of the dolphin-like round waves that froth  
About the feet of Aphrodite, still  
In wonder at herself born thus so fair ;  
Or of the dark heart of the forest shade,  
Where Pan, retired from gods' or mortals' ken,  
    Utters his regular snore  
    Day and night evermore.

Fragrant, and cool, and calm :  
Numberless gnats upon the mellowing air  
    Of sunset spin,  
The old boughs reach up to the darkening heaven,  
The nightingale makes paradise of pain,  
And fills obscurity with loveliness :  
Or, yet again—a green hill whence is seen  
The far strand strewn with shells, and barred with  
    waves ;  
Unearthly brightness breaks the clouds—the moon !  
    Endymion, sleepest thou ?  
    Sleep no more now.

I would some words inurn  
Worthy the poet's name to whom I bow,  
    Yet none he needs ;  
Thou, vestal of the night's mid-watch, and thou,  
The heralded of Hesperus, ye speak  
Of that sweet name, and shall speak on for aye :  
For such as love him with the love he gave,  
    His cenotaph is raised in Rome,  
    But the poet hath no tomb.



From the *Drift* by *P. O. W. O. S.*, *1833.*

### *THE INCANTATION OF HERVOR.*

(1833.)

At moonrise, Hervor left her couch  
Clad and tired and armed, the while  
She ceased not muttering magic runes.  
The sail was spread, the strenuous oar  
Whitened the dark blue waters,

Still she muttered the magic runes ;  
 In one night more they gained the strand,  
 And she ran forth to the battle-ground  
 Muttering still the magic runes.

‘ Father Angantyr, wake, awake !  
 Thine only daughter, Suafa’s child,  
 Doth charge thee to wake up again,  
 And give her the gold-hilted sword  
 Forged by the Dwarves for Suafarla ! ’

Her right fore-finger pointed like a spear  
 To the corse-kernel’d mound ; no voice replied.

‘ Ye of the iron shrouds, and shirts of brass,  
 Ye of the mast-like lance and glaive,  
 From beneath the stones I stir ye,  
 From beneath the roots of trees ;  
 Hervordur, Hiorvardur !  
 Hrani, Angantyr ! hear ! ’

She darkened her eyes with her long fair hands,  
 She listened and listened, no answer came.

‘ Are the sons of Angrim wholly dust ?  
 Are they who gloried in blood now ashes ?  
 Ha, ha ! can none of the strong dead speak ?  
 Hervordur, Hiorvardur !  
 Hrani, Angantyr ! hear ! ’

She thrust her arms abroad, with quivering tongue  
 She cursed, she cursed them in their rottenness.

‘Dust, ashes, worms ! so may ye ever be,  
Dust, ashes, worms ! within your ribs  
May the vermin lodge for ever !  
It shall be so, unless ye hear me,  
And yield up the charmèd sword !’

Here paused she again, and her eyes were seen  
Burning out through the dark brown night.  
Slowly a dreadful wailing rose ;  
A white light oozed from out the mould,  
She seemed to stand i’ the salt sea foam :  
The turf was rent, and the black earth yawned.

ANGANTYR.

O, daughter Hervor, raker among dead bones,  
Speaker unto the sealed-up ears of Death,  
Why call’st thou ? wilt thou rush to hell ?  
Is sense departed and Odin’s gift lost,  
That thou art here thus desperately tongued ?  
Nor father, nor brother, nor friend,  
Did cut the turf for me—  
Two men escaped – and one still holds  
Tirsing, the sword thou seekest,  
Tirsing, the incurable wounder.

HERVOR.

Tell’st thou a lie ! oh father, so may’st thou  
For evermore within flame-chains be bound,

If thou deniest me inheritance,  
If Tirsing be not given me !

## ANGANTYR.

And if so, Hervor, hear !  
The dead can prophesy, thy race  
One by one by this sword shall bleed !  
At one of thy sons, O Hervor !  
Men shall point and cry, 'Lo there !  
The mother-murderer !' if this sword shakes  
Against his thigh, O Hervor !

## HERVOR.

Angantyr ! never may'st thou frighten me,  
I care not what the dead man's voice can tell.  
Angantyr, spells are mine, thou shalt not rest  
Until that sword be mine also :  
I thought thee brave, but I have found thy hall,  
And thou dost quail : it is not good to rust  
The sword of heroes ;—give it forth !

## ANGANTYR.

Stalwart in courage, youngling maid,  
Who speakest the runes at midnight,  
Powerful in herbs ; who holdest the spear  
Rune-graven, and standest in helmet and shoe,  
Before the blackness and brightness of graves,  
The brand thou seekest beneath me lies,  
Wrapt in fire thou darest not touch.

HERVOR.

Lo ! how I shall wrench it from thee !  
I shall hold its edge unhurt ;  
The white fire of tombs cannot burn me,  
I dread not the white light of death.

ANGANTYR.

Horrible suffering !  
Hold thine arm  
Away from me :  
Perish not yet,  
Cover thine eyes  
If thou canst not endure it.

HERVOR.

Nothing I see  
But what I before knew.

ANGANTYR.

What seest thou now ?

HERVOR.

Father ! strange things !

ANGANTYR.

Now I ask thee again.

HERVOR.

I see a hand, but it is not that  
Of mortal living or dead, and a sword

Long and heavy and gold-chased, burning—  
 Tirsing is mine ! thou hast done well !  
 Greater triumph now is mine  
 Than if all Norway bowed to me.

## ANGANTYR.

Woman, thou dost not understand,  
 Rash speech is thine, that sword's thy bane,  
 Even as 'twas king Hialmar's bane  
 When in my hand it clove him down :  
 Hold it thou and hoard it well,  
 But touch not its two charmèd edges.  
 Farewell, daughter, all my lands,  
 Men and ships, arms, gold, and gods,  
 With this devouring sword are thine.

## HERVOR.

Well I shall hold it, I shall lift it,  
 Till all eyes have seen and feared it,  
 And my unborn sons shall wield it !  
 I return now to my bold men,  
 Where the waves vex the rocking helm :  
 No wish is mine to lie beside ye  
 In the hall that burns with death ;  
 No joy is mine to wait morn here  
 Where the adder is fat and strong,  
 Or keep thy tomb from closing now.  
 Sleep then, sires of warriors, sleep !



## FOUR ACTS OF SAINT CUTHBERT.

## FIRST.

*SAINT CUTHBERT'S TRIAL OF FAITH.*

A FAIR-FACED man our Cuthbert was,  
 The fairest ever seen,  
 His hair was fair and his eyebrow dark,  
 And bonny blue his eyen.

His kin were lewd and he was meek,  
 So he left them in God's fear,  
 And at morn he sat at his shealing's yett ;  
 The sun shone warm and clear.

The sun was high, it was so still  
 On hill and stream and wood,  
 That forthwith he broke into songs  
 Of praise to God so good.

The Saints above the firmament  
 Said one to another then :  
 'Hear ye that song from a land so dark  
 Of wicked and violent men?'

But Christ Himself above the Saints  
 Heard what was said and sung ;  
 ‘The heart of man is dark,’ quoth He,  
 ‘This Cuthbert is but young.’

Therewith a cloud passed o’er the sun  
 And a shadow o’er Cuthbert’s face ;  
 At once his limbs waxed lax and shrank,  
 And blisters rose apace.

The gold hair of his head grew gray,  
 His beard grew gray also,  
 He laid his breviary aside,  
 For his hand shook to and fro.

The husband crossed the stubble-field  
 Bringing his daily bread,  
 But when that leprous face he saw,  
 The evil man was glad.

‘Ha, Cuthbert, but yestreen a boy,  
 So old how canst thou be—  
 Now know I that thou art no Saint,  
 But God doth punish thee.’

The husband throws his cakes of rye  
 Upon the bench and goes,  
 But as he turned the meekest words  
 Of thanks from Cuthbert rose.

The maiden from the hill came next  
With a bunch of flowers so kind ;  
Her bowl of milk each second night  
Well knew he where to find.

A mountain maid, she was abashed  
A clerk to look upon,  
And she would wait at eve till he  
Into his cell was gone,  
Then steal within the yett, and lay  
The can upon a stone.

That day she sat upon the knoll,  
And saw him kneeling there ;  
She deemed it could not Cuthbert be,  
So gray was his brown hair.

Then down with silent feet she came  
And hid behind the trees,  
That by his shealing's end grew straight,  
The howf of summer bees.

She looked from out this covert good,  
She saw the change so grim ;  
But more than ever beautiful  
She thought his evening hymn.

The tears then from her sweet eyes fell,  
 To think of his beautië,  
 More swiftly gone than sorrel flowers,  
 More changed than autumn tree.

Now Cuthbert as he rose from prayer,  
 He saw the shaking leaves,  
 And heard the sobs, then asked he,  
 ‘ Who is it thus that grieves—  
 Is it the maiden from the hill  
 The alms of milk that leaves?’

With that he passed the shealing’s end,  
 Among the trees and bent,  
 But the maiden rose right hastily,  
 And away in fear she went.

The good man smiled to see her run,  
 Nor murmured he at all,  
 But read within the holy book  
 Until the night ’gan fall ;  
 Then cheerfully for sleep turned round,  
 And shut his wicket small.

Thereafter hunger in him rose,  
 But none brought cakes of rye,  
 And sore thirst made him very faint,  
 But no herd-maid came nigh :

Upon his knees he stumbled down  
That praying he might die.

‘As is his prayer shall be his meed,’  
Said Christ upon his throne ;  
When lo, he askèd not for strength  
And beauty once his own.

He askèd not the bread and milk  
The neighbours wont to give,  
But he gave thanks to God who had  
Measured his time to live.

The brown cloud passed from off the sun  
Now hidden five days and more,  
And from his face—he rose therefrom  
More beautiful than before !

## FOUR ACTS OF SAINT CUTHBERT.

## SECOND.

*SAINTE CUTHBERT'S PENANCE.*

THIS hield of Melrose wide and tall,  
 Whereof we four are freres,  
 Was at the time established first  
 When Cuthbert grew in years.

And so he joined the banded few  
 Who left their cares and strife,  
 With vows eschewing shows and gear,  
 To live a cloistered life.

I ween he was more humble than  
 The lowliest brother there,  
 Scarce would he dare to look up to  
 The great gilt rood at prayer

Scarce would he take his turn to read  
 Aloud at the midday meal,  
 Although he was so learnèd,—  
 He would the same conceal.

Scarce would he speak with fewest words  
Of Jesu's love and dole,  
But ever and anon the tears  
Over his eyelids stole.

The man whom Jesu died to bless  
He sometimes looked like too,  
But then his gladness suddenly  
To woful sadness grew.

Of would he scan from day to day  
Saint Chrysostom's great book,  
And all this watching-time no food  
Within his lips he took.

Of by the night, the winter night,  
When all are fain to cower,  
And other monks their rosaries laid  
Aside till matin hour,  
He went forth on the crispèd frost  
Right through the snow or shower.

Then gathered some with whisperings  
And twinklings of the eye,  
Who went about from cell to cell  
Saint Cuthbert to decry.

But still their spite he noted not,  
So byeward and so meek,  
And when that night was deepest dark  
The door was heard to creak.

Then from his pallet suddenly  
A cunning frere arose ;  
'I'll see,' quoth he, 'where in the mirk  
Our stalwart Cuthbert goes.'

So saying from his couch he slid  
And softly followèd him,  
Across the wood into the haugh,  
Led by the snow-marks dim.

Late at sunset the sleet had blown  
Into the eye of day ;  
Their slow steps verily were cold,  
Imprinted in the clay.

He followed to the river's edge ;  
But soon repented he  
That ever he did on such a chace  
With the other freres agree.

For fear came like an icicle  
Into his curdled brain,  
And sure he felt the cold more keen  
Than earthly frost or rain.



But from the stars shot arrowy sparks  
As if alone to him ;  
Till he waxed more wrothful than afraid,  
All woebegone but grim.

Quoth he, ' The youth must have some nook  
Wherein to bait him soon ;  
I'll find him out although I die  
I' the sedges in a swoon.'

Upon the sand he set his foot,  
He sank up to his thigh,  
And further in, hands raised in prayer,  
He saw sweet Cuthbert lie.

And a voice in his ear  
Said clear and low,  
' Until my servant press his bier  
What thou hast seen let no man hear ;  
Thy steps are loosened, go !'

## FOUR ACTS OF SAINT CUTHBERT.

## THIRD.

*SAINT CUTHBERT'S HERMITAGE.*

THE Saint had grown in years, as I  
 Have now by our Father's grace—  
 When he left the cloister for the cell,  
 Alone for a lonelier place.

He travelled without sack or scrip  
 As the sun doth day by day,  
 Till the patient staff he leant upon  
 Was chafèd half away.

Nor when he came into a town  
 Did he go near the lord,  
 But with the humblest did he house,  
 And sat at the scantest board.

At length upon Norhumber-land,  
 Beside the hungering sea,  
 He stood as the landward breezes brought  
 The fisherman home with glee.

‘Why stand ye here,’ the fisher said,

‘Your eye on the waters gray?’

‘I see,’ quoth he, ‘an island small,

Afar, like peace, away.’

‘An isle of rocks and sand it is,

And no fresh spring is there,

And in its blackened clefts and holes

Devils and changelings fare.’

‘A hermit’s benison be thine,—

Its name I now would learn;’

‘Father, a poor man’s thanks are mine,

The island’s name is Ferne.’

Next day upon Ferne’s beach he stept

From the good fisher’s bark;

His welcome such as Noah’s was

When he issued from the ark.

The boards of a tangled wreck and boughs

There stranded by the tide,

Took he for balks to bigg a bower

Wherein he might abide.

Next, that the waters might not swell

Upon him in the night,

He made a wall with stones, four men

Can’t shift with all their might.

That done, amidst his earthen floor,  
Beside his pan and wood,  
He caused a crystal spring to rise  
By signing of the rood.

With that he worken in the earth  
And sowed his onions there ;  
And when the crows and sea-mews came,  
They understood his care ;

And lifting up their beaks unfed,  
Flew silently away ;  
Also the mermaids, devils and wraiths,  
They came no more that way.

So Christ doth aid his faithful Saints  
To do such wondrous things,  
Their humbleness surpassing far  
The power and force of kings.

Also it is more beautiful  
Than Arthur's painted arms,  
Or belle Isonde's long locks of love,  
Or Queen Guenever's charms.

And happy it is beyond the song  
Of minstrelle's gemmèd keys ;  
Whom knights with guerdons in their hands  
Can purchase as they please.

Roundel and flourish and gleeman's chime !

Hark ! in the ha' we hear them now,

The wine is flowing rife I trow,

This is an Easter gay !

Saint Cuthbert ! pray ye for us all

Before we pass away.

King Egfrid from Norhumber-land,

And Saint Theodore also,

With a silver crosier o'er the waves

To Cuthbert's island go.

True tears then from his old eyes came,

(Blest ground whereon they fell !)

For a gyve of love did hold his heart

To his God-fashioned cell.

' I go,' said he, ' at God's good heste

Unto high places now,

Would that I might be spared, but all

At God's good heste should bow.'

With that he humbly bended down,

And so received the mitre-crown.

## FOUR ACTS OF SAINT CUTHBERT.

## FOURTH.

*SAINT CUTHBERT'S DEATH.*

My words are few and like the days  
 That o'er this brow may flit  
 Ere you my brethren well-beloved  
 See my mass-tapers lit.

Saint Cuthbert knew before they came,  
 When death-pains he should dree,  
 And for the last time took the cup  
 Kneeling on naked knee.

Then turned he on the altar-steps  
 Amidst the altar's light,  
 And laid aside his ring and staff,  
 And cope so richly dight.

Lastly he doffed his mitre there,  
 And every one 'gan weep :  
 Quickly he blessed them : then went forth  
 As a child that goes to sleep.

‘Now follow me not,’ said he, ‘no one  
Must follow me I trow,  
Save a brother who can hold the oar,  
I need none other now.’

They kissed his garments’ hem and feet,  
They kissed them o’er and o’er,  
And many times they stayed him quite  
That they might kiss them more.  
But he had caused them all to go  
Before he reached the shore.

And now he seats him in the boat  
With a rower by his side,—  
Along the greenery of the sea  
And foam-blossom they glide.

Soon they come to the long black swell  
That heaves their bark about :  
Hark, on the naked craigs of Ferne,  
The breakers, how they shout !

Nearer they come, the boatman now  
Holds on to the landing-stone,  
Saint Cuthbert riseth from his seat  
And totters out alone.

‘Father,’ said the boatman, ‘now  
The sun dips in the sea,—  
Must I return alone, and when  
Shall I come back for thee?’

The west was red, the cold wind blew,  
The clouds were gathering grim,  
Twilight was settling into night,  
When Cuthbert answered him :

‘Come when it seemeth good to thee,  
Or come no more at all,  
But if thou com’st uncowl thy head,  
And bring with thee a pall.’

No more the rower asked, but watched  
The feeble feet go on,  
When lo, the door of his ancient hut  
Was opened gently from within.  
And an odorous light  
Streamed out on the night ;  
He entered, and it closed him in ;  
The Saint to heaven was gone.



*THE DANCE OF DEATH.*

CLERK HUBERT lay asleep :  
 Not in deep sleep, but in the feverish sense  
     Midway between  
 The active living daylight and the world  
 Of dusk-eyed dreamland, when the memory  
 Goes dancing with the fancy light of heel,  
 Singing the while a fitful chant, of things  
 That may have happened and been long forgot,  
 Or those whose interest is of yesterday,  
     With other things that we  
     Mortals can never see.

Clerk Hubert lay asleep :  
 Not in deep sleep, but in the uncouth life  
     Wherein whate'er,  
 Waking, we have dwelt most upon, comes back  
 In a new garb and startles us awake,  
 Or keeps us bound upon the night-mare's back  
 Until its tale is told and all its train  
 Of maskers have performed their antic feats.  
     Presto ! they change ; behold  
     The maskers turned to gold.

Gold, gold, the much desired,—  
 And then, God wot, if any one did mark  
     The sleeper's face,  
 They would descry a broad smile flickering there ;  
 For truly pleased, yea, blessed he is to gain  
 What he had sought so long ; he calls his bonds  
 All in, but when he seeks the heaps to pay,  
 The gnomes have buried them ! Those sinewy gnomes,  
 Beardless and yellow, and his usurers,  
     Threadbare and lank and grim,  
     Treble and bass, strike up their hymn.

At other times right sad  
 And full of lamentations are these dreams :  
     When the lone heart  
 Is mourner, and before we rest ourselves  
 As cold night comes, we cast the black weeds off,  
 And they whose brow was veiled, who have gone hence,  
 Hold us in talk amidst the loneliness  
 And darkness : lighting up our lives again  
 With some familiar action, as of old.  
     And the tear doth dry  
     In the slumberer's eye.

By other beds, moth winged  
 And very gentle, are those sylphs that flit  
     'Tween night and morn ;  
 A subtle love-drink do they bring with them ;

And the deluded sleeper throws his arms  
Into the vacant air and turns again,  
Dreaming a hundred love joys in one dream.  
'Tis said these baseless fancies can assume  
The forms of all things but the sun and moon,  
    And stars that give us light  
    From other spheres more bright.

    Clerk Hubert lay quite still ;  
And I would now relate the dream he had,  
    If dream it was.

A set of Emblems old he had that day  
Been conning, and Hans Holbein's Dance of Death ;  
And as the eyelid closed upon the sense,  
These pictures came again, waxed into life,  
And fleetly through the windings of his brain  
The morthead apparition junketed,  
    And now and then he showed  
    His scythe so long and broad,

    And made a staff of it  
For leaping to and fro ; then would he stop  
    A-listening like ;  
When, if he heard the sound of winsome mirth,  
Or children's untired laugh at evensong  
Or age's groan,—which mattered not,—he sprang  
Alert, and silenced it for ever. Swart  
And ugly and albeit wise seemed he,

He neither gibber'd nor did make a moan,  
 No sound at all he made whate'er he did,  
     Hither and there,  
     And everywhere.

    And now in the dark night  
 The minster bell began to jowl eleven,—  
     The Christian bell,  
 With its deep sound o'er slumbering roofs ; then up  
 Death mounted, in the mid-air o'er the spire  
 The new day was just kissing with the old.  
 But scarcely had the clock told half its tale,  
 In at the carven window of the spire  
 He went, where was the bellman pulling stout,  
     By the rope that twisted  
     The bell as he listed.

    Then Death put forth his hand;  
 And at the same time that the man did pull  
     He smote the bell,  
 That split like earthen cup from rim to ring ;—  
 A labourer heard it as he counting lay,  
 And counting only six, he thought 'twas morn,  
 And groped about to find the tinder-flint.  
 Another heard it, a young student, still  
 Sitting as he had sat since yesterday,  
     Scanning and poring,  
     Scribing and scoring.

So with a wearied sigh  
He laid his cheek upon his hand a while,  
                    Some strength to gain,  
To recommence his task and finish it ;  
But Death sucked up the oil that stored his lamp,  
And, with a moment's dance, the barbèd flame  
Went up, and he was in the dark. Away  
Sped Death above the city in a swirl  
Of wind, and every chimney rocked, and some  
                    Fell down and battered  
                    The street, ruin-scattered.

Out of sight speeds he on high,  
And the clouds burst open, the rain comes down  
                    As the winds arise  
Rattling the hinges of windows and doors ;  
He is here, is there, is everywhere :  
And as he passes the frog turns up  
Its white belly, and the strong-limbed trees  
Bend to the shivering earth, and pour  
Their yellowing leaves like the dust of years,  
                    And the wavering bat  
                    On the earth falls flat.

The everlasting hills  
Throw down their rocks at his approach ;  
                    The eagle old  
Soars till the lightning sears her wing,

And falls where the blind bat fell before ;  
He touches the bridge as he onward speeds,  
The keystone drops and the great arch falls,  
Damming the black triumphant stream,  
    As the foam boils up  
    Like a poison cup.

    In the cottager's thatch  
He boreth a hole for the wolfish wind  
    To enter by.  
From her storm-strewn nest the small bird flies,  
The cottager doth the same, you'll hear  
His cry, and you'll hear the thunder growl,  
And the rush of the stream, and the forest's roar,  
The wheezing catarrh from the chimney-nook  
Of the palsy-shaken, and childhood's whine,—  
    And each one's breath  
    Is sucked by Death.

    Clerk Hubert sweated cold,  
As the tempest still more revelled and shook  
    His casement loose ;  
And now it seemed it was the ending hour  
Of the old year, and that men kept awake,—  
He heard their songs at intervals he thought,—  
Waiting upon the bell to toll the twelve,  
That they might with their hot drink wish good luck  
Of the New Year, as is the custom old ;

Again his casement shook, it shattered, and  
Death stretched in  
His hand and his chin.

Clerk Hubert started up,—  
Opening his eyes in wonder he beheld  
The Ancient One.  
Men see in sleep,—but whether he still slept,  
Or whether 'twas a trance, a charm, that wrought  
At that strange instant of eternal time,  
When earth and sun combine to start afresh,  
And we must add a cypher to our date—  
The blood and brain this epoch shares perchance—  
Or whether 'twas a restlessness of heart,  
I know not, but he started and stood up ;  
For who can answer ' Nay,'  
When Death sayeth ' Yea.'

'Come out, come out with me,  
And I will show thee one night's government  
Of my vast realm :  
Sceptre and sword and throne I have none, these  
I give unto my helpmates : but come thou,  
And heaven and hell will be revealed to thee  
And all the opening pageants of the grave.  
Come thou with me ;  
I touch thine eyes, they see.

‘ I am the one whose thought  
Is as the deed ; no power before me went,  
And none shall come  
Behind me ; I am strengthened with the years :  
A nether Omega am I : a chain  
I bound round all things lasts for evermore :  
Under my touch, Man vanishes as doth  
The worm he germinates, the moth that comes  
From the maggot, the invisible living thing  
That stirs upon the moth,—I am inborn  
With all lives, and  
With all lives I expand.

‘ But fear me not, I am  
The hoary dust, the shut ear, the profound,  
The heart at rest,  
The tongueless negative of nature’s lies,—  
Fear me not, for I am the blood that flows  
Within thee ; I am change ; it is even I  
Creates a joy and triumph when thou feel’st  
New powers within thee ; I alone can make  
The old give place  
To thy onward race.

‘ All men are born to me ;  
I am the father, mother,—yet ye hate  
Me foolishly :  
An easy spirit and a free lives on,



But he who fears the ice doth stumble ; walk  
Peacefully, confidently ; I'm thy friend,  
To walk with thee in peace : but grudge and weep  
And carp, I'll be a cold chain round thy neck  
Into the grave, each day a link drawn in,  
Until thy face shall be upon the turf,  
And the hair from thy crown  
Be blown like thistle-down.'

The speaker without breath  
Here ceasèd, and Clerk Hubert winced and groaned,  
Withouten power  
To speak the horrors that within him stirred,—  
A desperate case was his indeed, till Death  
Grew tired of waiting, and took hold of him,  
Or nearly did—in vain again he tried  
To shout, now mouth to mouth with that dread lord,  
Who stood by the bed,  
Close to his head.

Such trembling seized his limbs  
As shook the stented couch ; whereat the dame  
Who by him lay,  
The wedded mistress of this learnèd Clerk,  
Woke up in gentle fear for her good lord,  
And roused him up and made him tell his dream,  
Signing the cross on her brow and his own,

For he averr'd Death next would come to her,  
And that her life  
Would end the strife.

But this she would not hear,  
But rather deemed his love alone had brought  
The phantom there.

He answered, 'Nay, that Death was by them still,  
And that her passing-bell was in his ear,  
Nor would a few months pass till every man  
Would hear it.' Then she soothed him with sweet  
words,

Again in a short while  
Once more sleep held them in its coil.

But the morning arose  
On a long sheeted corse,  
And the stable-boy combing  
A coal-black horse :  
The corse was Clerk Hubert's ;  
The black horse ere long  
Drew the bier to the church-vault  
With prayer and song.

*A FABLE.*

(1832.)

Two striplings in the ancient time  
Between themselves agreed to climb  
The Holy Mount ; perchance they'd see  
Something of life's great mystery,  
Through the smoke or through the fires  
That hill's Tartarean throat respire.  
Forthwith they fixed with leathern thong  
Their brazen sandals high and strong,  
And bent their knees to the ascent  
A league or two, when overspent  
And breathless, one of them cried out,  
'Comrade, hold ! I'm not so stout  
As thus to urge for long ; I'll call  
The sun to stay awhile his fall,  
And give us time to rest us here !'  
So with a self-complacent peer  
Adown the slope, he stretched himself  
Like one who would give all his pelf  
For a snug retreat and a full wine-cup,

And would say to himself, I shall drink it up,  
I deserve it all, I have done enough,  
Labour without a fee's all stuff!  
The other adventurer looked up still,  
Scanning and measuring all the hill ;  
Lost he seem'd in expectation,  
Living on hope's immaterial ration ;  
But now, while nursing his left foot  
As if it were sick, cried the first, ' Let's put  
A great stone here to mark the spot  
Before we start again ; why not ?'  
His comrade half indignant rose  
And clipt a snail by its shrinking nose  
Between his finger and his thumb,  
And with a grand flourish derisive and dumb,  
Placed it for the monument,  
Then set himself to the ascent.  
So now again for an hour or so  
Abreast like loving friends they go ;  
Wading scoria, vaulting creeks  
Where the sluggish lava reeks,  
When suddenly he who before had stopt,  
In a fainting fit of laughter dropt.  
' Ha ! my comrade bold,' quoth he,  
' I have been thinking, ha, ha, he !  
I have been thinking, that a cat,  
Or a squirrel, a weasel, or even a rat,  
Could climb this hill much better than we !

What fools we are one drop of sweat  
To lose in such a monstrous fret,  
Making a toil of a pleasure. No !  
Let's lie down here an hour or so,  
Until the sun gets round the hill.'  
'Nay !' cries his companion, 'if you will  
Rest here, you shall rest alone, not I,  
And long enough before you spy  
The top, I'm there.' With that he left  
The weak one seeking a shady cleft.

Onward sped he through the glare,  
With naked breast and loosened hair ;  
Onward still he won his way  
And touched the sky ere close of day.

Next morn a rabble with horn-books, beads,  
Bells, drums, masks, and other small needs  
For mumming and make-believe, descried  
The laggard slumbering on his side.  
He was not half-way up the hill,  
And yet a great way above them still ;  
Something they wanted to gabble about,  
And there was he ! so they raised a shout,  
Wonderful !—a mere boy ! oh,  
Such love of science and such a flow  
Of perseverance, courage, all  
Supposable virtues great and small !

Doubtless he hath toiled all night  
Without either supper or lantern-light,  
And now returns in time to greet  
Our wise-heads with the hill's last feat.  
Mighty traveller! They shout,  
Till he starts and wakes and looks about,  
Rubbing his eyes and wondering why  
They stare at him so, stare and cry,  
Mighty traveller! But soon  
He saw it was indeed full moon,  
Full tide I rather ought to say  
For him and his affairs that day.  
—'Tis true he had been outstripped far,  
But why should that be the smallest bar;  
His comrade, the true conqueror, he  
Is just too high for them to see,—  
Down steps Sir Magnanimity  
With air coquettish, pleased and shy,  
The mummers raise him shoulder high,  
And with their awkward backs round bent,  
The youth of genius smiles content.  
On to the temple where all stuff  
Useless elsewhere shares the puff  
Of incense now they carry him,  
With damnable clatter and chant of hymn;  
Cobbler, patcher, quidnunc, drone,  
'Idea-less girl,' and long-tongued crone,  
Running together, a quack never lacks

Bolstering from bolstered quacks,  
'Claw me—claw thee,' suits both the backs!  
But it is, good sooth, a stint of labour  
To dance and leap, with pipe and tabor  
Stunning the wide-mouthed beholders,  
With a false god on one's shoulders;  
So they seat him on the shrine  
And aver he looks divine,  
Although at first he feels but queer,  
And now and then begins to fear  
His honours may be overdone,  
Even if he be Apollo's son;  
When lo, like Moses from Sinai,  
The other traveller stands close by!  
He had seen the moon's eclipse  
Through the fire from Etna's lips,  
With Orion had he spoken,  
His fast with honey-dew had broken,  
Seen the nether world unveiled,  
Nor had fainted nor had quailed:  
And here he stands amidst the throng,  
On his tongue a wise sweet song,  
In his hand a laurel fair,  
An opal rainbow round his hair,  
Truth reigning from his great mild eye,  
And in his heart humility.  
Cease their din the rabble-rout,  
And mutter and whisper all about,

‘What’s his name, and whence comes he?  
What may here his business be?  
Do you understand his speech?  
He seems at once to sing and preach!’  
The cobblers, patchers, quidnuncs, drones,  
‘Idea-less girls’ and long-tongued crones,  
Nod and wink and say, ‘So, so,  
We’ve chosen our Genius, and want no mo’,  
One like ourselves we’ve chosen, one  
Who has not with such haste begun,  
One who can sing and who can preach,  
Who can whistle as well as teach,  
But one who is not such a dunce  
As to addle our heads by them all at once!’  
With that they drive him from the place,  
They raise their hands against his face,  
They will not suffer his eyes’ sharp light,  
They mock him and drive him into night.  
O saddest sight of all, they steal  
The laurel when his senses reel,  
And give it to their favourite!

But whether the history endeth here,  
Doth not certainly appear:  
Time bears a wallet at his back,  
And very willingly ‘gives the sack’



To much that glitters proud and fine ;  
While the shoots that nature loves ne'er tine,  
But grow and grow, and the birds of the air  
Find nourishment and harbour there.



*DEDICATIO POSTICA.*

Now many years ago in life's midday,  
     I laid the pen aside and rested still,  
     Like one barefooted on a shingly hill :  
 Three poets then came past, each young as May,  
 Year after year, upon their upward way,  
     And each one reached his hand out as he passed,  
     And over me his friendship's mantle cast,  
 And went on singing, everyone his lay.  
 Which was the earliest? methinks 'twas he  
     Who from the Southern laurels fresh leaves brought,  
     Then he who from the North learned Scaldic  
         power,  
     And last the youngest, with the rainbow wrought  
     About his head ; a symbol and a dower.—  
 But I can't choose between these brethren three.

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